



THE INDEPENDENT

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Meet the bossiest woman in the world
John Walsh on a cabbie's pin-up
Section Two



Win a Porsche Boxster
See page 7 for token

Colin Jackson, a champion in exile
Exclusive interview
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Three British soldiers die in Bosnia blast

Armoured vehicle blown up by mine

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Tuzla and Agencies in Gorzji Vakuf

Three British soldiers in the multinational Bosnia peace force were killed yesterday when their vehicle hit a land mine in west-central Bosnia. They were the first fatal casualties to British troops since they joined Nato's Bosnia peace operation.

The soldiers were travelling in an armoured vehicle that hit a mine near Mrkonjic Grad, in an area which is due to be returned from Croat to Bosnian Serb control under the Dayton peace agreement.

Lieutenant-Colonel David Shaw, an Army spokesman in Gorzji Vakuf, said attempts to get to the vehicle were hampered by difficult weather and by the possibility of other, unmarked land mines.

The men's names and units were not made immediately available. Col Shaw said three men had been travelling with a second British armoured vehicle when the explosion occurred. The incident happened in a volatile area, nicknamed the Arvil.

Until yesterday the British were delighted with the success of their operation, supervising the withdrawal of Croat forces from the area, ensuring the withdrawal of armed troops from the zone of separation

between Croats and Serbs and marking all the minefields.

There are estimated to be up to 6 million mines scattered around Bosnia. Although the former warring factions have tried to identify as many as possible, many unmarked minefields remain. Nato engineers believe no more than 30 per cent have been marked.

The British armoured vehicles hit yesterday were travelling west of Mrkonjic Grad, in an area where the Nato-led peace force, I-For, did not believe the three warring sides had laid mines. Part of the peace agreement is for the warring sides to hand over maps of where they put mines.

The British unit in the area is 4 Armoured Brigade, of Gulf War fame. Its troops come from the Second Battalion The Light Infantry and the Royal Fusiliers, with support from the Royal Artillery and the Royal Logistic Corps. The peace implementation force will eventually total 60,000 troops. Britain has about 13,000 men and women taking part.

Up to yesterday, 35 soldiers of the Nato-led peace force had been injured since the troops began arriving in Bosnia, most of them in mine accidents. Four soldiers had died, including one British soldier who killed himself at Christmas.

Two Portuguese soldiers and one Italian were killed in Sara-

jemo last week when a piece of ordnance which one of them brought in from the field exploded in their sleeping quarters. An American officer was grazed in the neck yesterday by a bullet which struck him as he walked on the grounds of a Sarajevo hotel complex used by Nato as headquarters for its ground force commander in Bosnia. Nato said he "was shot in an apparent sniper incident".

French Nato forces reported two separate shooting incidents on Saturday in the area, but could not identify the firing points or the targets.

Other parts of the peace deal took effect yesterday when 82 Bosnian government prisoners of war, among them two women holding a baby who was born in captivity, walked to freedom at Sarajevo airport. However, their Serb captors refused to free all their detainees.

Jubilant relatives greeted the Muslim men in the Sarajevo suburb of Dobrinja. But for some women there were only tears when they found their husbands and sons were not among those released.

A Red Cross spokesman, Pierre Gauthier, confirmed the Serbs had released 74 men from prison in Foca, eastern Bosnia, at the airport, while in central Bosnia the Muslim-led government freed 76 Serb prisoners from Travnik.

Old foes, page 8

Legends roll back the years just for fun, fun, fun



They may have lost their hair and the waists are a bit thicker, but the music sounds the same. Thirty years after his last performance in Britain, Brian Wilson (front left) and the Beach Boys played in Brighton, south London yesterday with Status Quo.

The ageing West Coast surfers and singalong rock

'n rollers came together because Wilson has re-recorded his classic single, "Fun, Fun, Fun" with Status Quo, who are celebrating 30 years in the music business. Mike Love, Beach Boys vocalist and co-writer of "Fun, Fun, Fun", said: "We have always been known for our vocals, while Quo are famous for their guitar sound."

The song is dynamic with the two put together. With Wilson are Francis Rossi (Status Quo, front right) and (back, left to right) Mike Love (Beach Boys, in cap), Rick Parfitt (Status Quo), Al Jardine (Beach Boys), Jeff Rich (Status Quo)

Photograph: Philip Meech

Challenge to Keays court gag

JAMES CUSICK

The Lord Chancellor's Department will today study the legal implications of parliamentary tactics used by a Labour MP to sidestep a High Court gagging order and bring renewed publicity to the illegitimate daughter of Lord Parkinson.

Brian Sedgmore MP has tabled a House of Commons motion which states: "This House calls for a change in the law to prevent a gross denial of human rights as in the case of Sara Keays and her daughter." The child, Flora, aged 12, is handicapped after suffering from a brain tumour at infancy. Miss Keays is the former secretary of Cecil Parkinson. In

1983, when Mr Parkinson was Secretary of Trade and Industry, it was revealed that Miss Keays was carrying his child. The couple had conducted a lengthy affair. The scandal wrecked Lord Parkinson's ambitions of higher political office.

After the birth of their daughter, on New Year's Eve 1983, a number of legal battles over publicity were fought out in the courts. The latest order, just after Christmas last year, was granted in the Court of Appeal which ruled that the gagging order on the child, now aged 12, must remain till she reached adulthood. She was also refused an appeal to the Lords.

Mr Sedgmore's motion,



Court order: Sarah Keays

which is protected by parliamentary privilege, states that Miss Keays and the child had been subjected to "a blanket gag on all publicity relating to a child who has fought a magnificent

battle against the adversity of a brain tumour, frequent fits, eventual surgical removal of the tumour and a lengthy recuperation".

The motion continues that "the mother has every right now to fight for proper educational provision for her daughter using publicity to pursue her case".

Miss Keays has sought and received some of the best medical care in the world. It is understood that the child has made remarkable progress after the attention of renowned paediatric specialists outside the UK.

It is also understood, from sources, that a television film has been made of the child's treatment, which was said to be

"very moving". Under the terms of the gagging order, it cannot be shown.

In addition to the attention of the Lord Chancellor's office, it is likely that lawyers representing Lord Parkinson will be studying Mr Sedgmore's motion.

The Labour MP who is himself a qualified barrister, will know that his motion is effectively protected in the 1789 Bill of Rights which states that parliamentary proceedings "may not be impeached" by any court in the land. However, if challenged, the case could go on to be tested in the European Courts.

Neither Mr Sedgmore nor Miss Keays were available to comment yesterday.

Energy crisis as grid warns of power cuts

MARY FAGAN and JOJO MOYES

Britain's privatised utilities yesterday became embroiled in controversy again after it emerged that complaints about British Gas more than doubled last year and the National Grid warned of power cuts tonight.

Labour called for a public inquiry after the Gas Consumers Council, which last year recorded the highest number of complaints - 49,104 - for almost a decade, accused British Gas of misleading people on "peace of mind" service contracts. Most of those approaching the council had complained but failed to receive satisfactory replies.

A warning sent on Saturday by the National Grid to the 12 regional electricity companies in England and Wales said up to 2 million homes could be left without power at around the 5pm peak this evening. The industry was braced for record peaks in electricity demand if the cold weather persisted.

The crisis is partly due to British Gas calling in its rights to cut off very large users - in-



including those supplying power stations - who get cheaper gas in return for agreeing to interruptions in supply when demand from other consumers soars.

Last night Labour demanded a public inquiry, urging the Select Committee on Trade and Industry to look at the performance of the privatised utilities. Nigel Griffiths, Labour's consumer affairs spokesman, accused the Government of sitting "impotently on the sidelines".

"The Government has no policy except to hand over responsibility to irresponsible energy companies," Mr Griffiths said. "These services are falling apart."

The latest blow to British Gas comes just weeks before it is due to lose its monopoly over domestic customers, with competition scheduled to start in the south-west of England in April.

Ian Powe, director of the Consumer Council said that the escalation in complaints came in spite of warnings issued 12 months ago that British Gas needed urgently to restore customers confidence before rivals entered the marketplace.

Some other suppliers including offshore firms and electricity companies are saying they will be undercutting British Gas prices by up to 15 per cent.

Roy Gardner, the director widely tipped to succeed Cedric Brown as chief executive, said: "Recent severe weather has stretched our resources even further as our service business experienced double the normal number of calls."

Pipeline row, page 16

Doubles all round at 'luckiest pub'

JOJO MOYES

Visitors to Britain's luckiest pub were last night hoping there was something in the beer as they drank a toast to the second regular to become a National Lottery millionaire.

Jackie Green, 26, was drinking with friends in the White Lion in Fallowfield, Greater Manchester, on Saturday when her numbers came up on the pub's television, winning her about £10m of the shared rollover £40m jackpot.

It was the second jackpot win for White Lion regulars.

The pub is also the favourite haunt of John Beisty, who with partner Mel Eddison, shared a £2.5m win last summer.

"Jackie's a regular here - a happy, single girl who enjoys a night out with her pals - and she was just sat checking the numbers out on her ticket," said landlord's son Lionel Kemp.

"We thought at first she'd won £100,000 and then when the last number came up the place just went wild. Jackie couldn't speak. She burst into tears and began shaking like a leaf. All the lads in the vault were cheering and shouting.

The scenes were unbelievable," he said.

Britain's latest multi-millionaire then spent the next 20 minutes in the ladies' toilet, after being taken in there by her cousin.

"She was too dazed to celebrate and they left the pub 20 minutes later, still in a state of shock," Mr Kemp said. "Everyone is really pleased for her. She's just a normal, happy-go-lucky girl."

Mr Eddison said yesterday: "I just don't believe there's another winner from that pub - they must put something in the beer."

I don't know Jackie but my partner, John Beisty, is a regular at the White Lion. He still goes in there."

He said he was "really pleased" for the latest winner, adding: "I'm convinced Fallowfield is a lucky place and I'm going to win again."

Last night Ms Green, an office worker who lives with her divorced father, Bob, was not to be found at the White Lion. She and her family were said to be celebrating at a Manchester hotel. Camelot said that a winner "would be going public" in Manchester today.

IN BRIEF

New clue to mystery killer

Glasgow police want to exhume the body of a man who has been linked to a Scottish serial killer by genetic fingerprinting. Page 3

Pennsylvania siege

Police were trying to negotiate with a millionaire who barricaded himself in his Pennsylvania home after shooting a former wrestling star. Page 8



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news

No signs of thaw in Anglo-Irish chill

DAVID MCKITTRICK
Ireland Correspondent

Anglo-Irish relations remained as chilly as the weather at the weekend, with Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring accusing Britain of trying to "divide and conquer" his government. Sinn Féin, meanwhile, declared that it not take part in any new assembly.

Mr Spring made it clear that Dublin had registered a strong protest both against John Major's proposal of an election as the next stage of the peace

process and against his alleged lack of consultation with Dublin.

He said on Irish radio: "The British know full well how we feel after the last few days. We have made it very clear, and we will not be treated in this manner for the future." Mr Spring's words will not help the atmosphere at his Anglo-Irish conference meeting with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Sir Patrick Mayhew, on Thursday.

Mr Spring, asked about alleged British briefings that his

position differed from that of the Taoiseach, John Bruton, said: "That's been an old British tactic down through the years. That's not just an Irish experience; we have seen this in many parts of the world. The British set out to divide and conquer. They have made attempts before to divide us and they have not succeeded."

While Unionist parties have warmly welcomed the election move, it is clear that all sections of Nationalist opinion were offended by Mr Major's proposal and the way in which he made

it. The belief that he was at least partly motivated by the hope of securing Unionist support in the Commons is now common currency among Nationalist politicians.

An expression of defiance and opposition came from Sinn Féin yesterday, with Martin McGuinness assuring thousands of at a Londonderry rally to commemorate the Bloody Sunday shootings: "We are not going to be part of their assembly."

Mr McGuinness added: "The Unionists want their assembly

and the British Government wants to give them their assembly, harking back to the days of the old Stormont. No matter what they say, that is exactly what they are doing. Well, we are not going to give them their new Stormont."

The Social Democratic and Labour Party deputy leader, Seamus Mallon, also attacked the Government, accusing Mr Major of trying to buy Unionist votes and claiming: "He has done the dirty on the Irish Government in a very public and humiliating way." The SDLP

leader, John Hume, is to meet Mr Major tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Mr Mallon also attacked Tony Blair, saying the Labour leader "should begin to realise that you cannot solve problems simply by running in the slipstream of the Prime Minister."

He said: "I find it very difficult to understand the situation in the House of Commons, on the single most important issue affecting Northern Ireland, that Mr Blair and the Labour Party seem to be willy-nilly supporting the Government position."

Donald Dewar, the Labour Chief Whip, said he was sorry Mr Mallon felt as strongly as he did on the issue. He said Labour took a "totally bipartisan approach to Ulster and wanted to talk to all the groups involved to move things on."

Ms Mowlem, Labour's Northern Ireland spokeswoman, tried to assuage SDLP anger on Saturday by criticising John Major for failing to consult them. But she went on: "That does not mean in any way we will split from our bipartisan approach."

IN BRIEF

£16,000 for man wrongly jailed

A man who was wrongly convicted of an armed robbery has been paid £16,000 in compensation by the Home Office.

Michael Boler, in his 30s, from Chesterfield, Derbyshire, was jailed for 10 years for a raid on the Halifax building society in Derby in 1989. Two witnesses picked him out at an identity parade despite an alibi.

His case was taken to the Appeal Court, which ordered a retrial, after another man confessed. The Crown Prosecution Service then dropped the charges. The award was a discretionary payment.

'George' crowned

The *Madness of King George* scooped three Evening Standard Film Award awards – for best direction, screenplay and cinematography. Jonathan Pryce won the best actor award for his performance as Lytton Strachey in *Caravaggio*, and Kristin Scott-Thomas won best actress, for the second year running, with *Angels and Insects*.

Food for thought

Families appear seriously confused about what is meant by a balanced diet, a report on eating habits suggests. The survey of more than 100 households by *Family Circle* magazine and the National Dairy Council found that 62 per cent of women and 73 per cent of men ate too much fat with nourishing foods often being substituted for cakes, biscuits, puddings and soft drinks.

Social unrest

A campaign to help social workers who are being bullied by their managers has been launched following an increase in threats and intimidation. The British Union of Social Work Employees, representing 3,000 social workers, says it has highlighted the problem after being "overwhelmed" with complaints.

Canteens in decline

The number of workplace canteens has fallen "drastically" over the past decade and meal prices have gone up above the rate of inflation, it was revealed. A survey by the Labour Research Department found the average price of a cup of canteen tea has gone up by 21 per cent since 1991 – from 14p to 17p – with most firms only giving staff 30 minutes to eat lunch.

Fish for stress

People suffering from stress should stop eating junk food, join a gym, buy tropical fish and have energetic sex, says a guide on how to relieve the problem. Further advice in *Personal Success* magazine, which says more than 90 million working days are lost each year in the UK because of stress, include writing swear words on a piece of paper.

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BACK ISSUES
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Sperm whales follow leader to death on beach

Coastguards were last night mounting a security vigil on six sperm whales which died after becoming stranded on a North Sea beach.

Hundreds of onlookers flocked to Cruden Bay beach, north of Aberdeen, after the 25ft-long mammals were discovered yesterday, but they were kept away from the site by a police cordon.

Desperate attempts were made by animal protection officers to save one of the whales found barely alive, but it died before a vet reached the scene. The vet eventually pronounced dead all the whales – some weighing more than 10 tons.

Environmental health officers, police and coastguards spent the day examining ways of disposing of the huge mammals. It also emerged that five of the creatures may have perished while trying to escort a sick whale as it headed towards shallow water.

Disposing of the whales has been described as "extremely complicated" by coastguards because they are beached on soft sand which would hamper attempts to use heavy lifting equipment. If the animals are buried on the beach a protective fence would have to be erected around the grave to protect public health.

SSPCA inspector Sylvester Hay said: "It appears the dominant whale in the school had been ill and came in so close to shore that it became stuck on a sandbank and could not return to the deeper water."

"The other whales appear to have followed it in and also became stuck. It is a tragic case."



Sandy grave: One of the six sperm whales that died after becoming beached at Cruden Bay, in Aberdeenshire

Photograph: Chris James

Brown furious at Tory crime attack

The Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, and the Shadow Chancellor, Gordon Brown, were embroiled in a furious row last night after Labour was branded the criminal's friend.

Mr Heseltine – broadening Tory accusations of "Labour hypocrisy" from education to law and order – sparked Opposition outrage by declaring that Tony Blair's party was "on the side of the villain".

Mr Brown immediately challenged the Deputy Prime Minister to withdraw his "preposterous" remark, and accused the Conservative Party of sinking to a new low in "sneers" and "dirty tricks".

The Labour Deputy Leader, John Prescott, campaigning in Hemsworth, said: "It proves what Labour has always said – that the Tories intend to fight the dirtiest general election campaign ever."

Mr Heseltine levelled his charge in a radio interview, in which he stressed that the Tories would spearhead a "very positive" election campaign which would emphasise improving economic prospects.

He told BBC Radio 4's *The World This Weekend*: "There are very positive aspects. We have the most successful economy in western Europe, we have had unemployment falling for 28 months."

But training his fire on Labour's "hypocrisy on crime" Mr Heseltine said: "Labour today is saying it wants to be tough on crime, but it votes against all the things the Conservatives have done to achieve one of the fastest-falling crime rates we have seen in this country for many years."

"Labour traditionally is on the side of the villain, whereas the Tories are on the side of the victim."

"When we have introduced tougher sentencing, have questioned the right to silence, have increased maximum sentences – every time, Labour votes against these things. The fact is, we have now got more people in prison, we have got more prisons being built, we have got more policemen on the beat."

But Mr Brown hit back, saying: "All decent-minded people will be horrified that instead of addressing the country's problems with health, education and employment, Mr Heseltine and the Conservatives are descending into personalised attacks, sneers and dirty tricks."

Blair plans to deflect heat over education

JOHN RENTOUL
Political Correspondent

Tony Blair, the Labour leader, will again try to turn the education debate away from the issue of selective schools today by promoting controversial plans for "fast-tracking" bright children, moving them up a year in their best subjects.

The move is aimed at reassuring so-called "aspirational" parents that Labour is the party of high standards, after the negative signals sent by last week's Labour backlash against health spokeswoman Harriet Harman's decision to send her son to a selective grammar school.

But fast-tracking is also regarded with suspicion by teaching unions – and much of the Labour Party – for promoting selection within schools rather than between them. John Stun, general secretary of the

Secondary Heads Association, said: "No one seems able to get away from talking about our most able children. I cannot for the life of me see what this will do for middle-ability children, who are most failed by the present system."

Mr Blair has rewritten a speech on social policy, to be delivered today to a church audience at Southwark Cathedral, south London, to focus on education. His aides said this reflected his conviction that the future over Ms Harman's decision to send her son to a selective grammar school.

Informal opinion polling confirmed that "people are more concerned about where they send their children to school than where Harriet sends her children", they said.

Mr Blair's speech will outline plans for incentives for the best graduate teachers to go to "sink" inner-city schools. Mr

Sutton dismissed this as "a disorienting statement", saying the "social priority area allowance" was tried in the 1970s and "it didn't work".

Meanwhile, uncertainty over Mr Blair's plans for the existing 160 selective grammar schools continued to provoke Labour critics yesterday. Roy Hattersley, the former deputy Labour leader, said: "There is a need for clarification."

Mr Blair will say nothing about existing selective schools in his speech, except to insist: "The real issue is not selection in 160 schools, it is standards in 25,000 schools serving seven million children."

David Blunkett, Labour's education spokesman, last week expanded on party policy, which is that the fate of selective schools is a matter for "local agreement". He said the parents of children in all local primary schools would be balloted.

JOHN RENTOUL

The Child Support Agency is to be given new powers to inquire into the lifestyle of men suspected of passing assets to second wives in order to avoid maintenance payments to children of first marriages, the social security minister, Andrew Mitchell, confirmed yesterday.

The CSA will be able to ignore tax returns and certified accounts to make a judgement on standards of living, and men may have to explain how they can afford expensive cars, luxury homes and foreign holidays.

"It's the cavalry coming over the hill for a small but important minority of people," Mr Mitchell told the *Independent*. He referred to evidence highlighted by the CSA of a number of cases where apparently rich men had transferred all or most of their assets into the name of a new wife or mistress.

The measures were foreshadowed in last year's white paper on CSA reform, in response to a storm of criticism of its rigid formula for calculating maintenance payments. The package, which has now had "flesh put on the bones", will be tested in a pilot scheme in Hastings in April and should go nationwide at the end of the year. Men accused of high living while declaring low assets and income will have the right of appeal to an independent tribunal.

But groups campaigning against the CSA condemned the new powers as a "snooper's charter". Paul Doney of the Network Against the CSA said: "The CSA is giving a great deal of scope to vindictive ex-wives." Opponents fear women will be encouraged to spy on their former husbands and collect evidence of high spending.

But the Commons social security select committee is expected to publish a report on Thursday backing the plan, which will describe "asset-rich, income-poor" fathers as one of the biggest problems facing lone mothers. David Shaw, Conservative MP for Dover and a committee member, said: "There are still a lot of men who don't want to pay a penny towards their first family, and are becoming increasingly sophisticated at beating the system by passing their money to their companies or to new wives."

In one case, Terri West, a mother of two, campaigned against CSA decisions to reduce her former husband's contributions to zero. She said Chris Thangardis, a record producer, lived in a £300,000 house, had a Porsche, two BMWs and employed a gardener and cleaner. The CSA was only allowed to rule on the basis of audited accounts which showed he earned £14,340 a year.

CSA to target high-life men with second wives

Winter's toll: Sub-zero temperatures claim a child's life as forecasters warn of more bitterly cold weather

Boy, 5, is found frozen to death

A five-year-old boy froze to death after apparently becoming trapped in the back yard of a derelict house.

Damian Williams was last seen building a snowman outside his home in Aubrey Street, Middlesbrough, on Saturday. His body was found yesterday just 200 yards from his home.

Police said there were no suspicious circumstances and the pathologist who carried out the

post-mortem examination had found "features consistent with death from hypothermia".

One theory was that Damian got into the disused property and could not get out because of the height of gate latch.

His fully-clothed body was found in the yard, which has two metre high walls, by police searching the area.

Superintendent Maurice Jones, of Cleveland police, told

a news conference the boy could have fallen accidentally, become unconscious and died from the cold overnight.

The boy's mother Patricia, 25, reported him missing at 2pm on Saturday.

Damian, who has a younger sister and two older brothers, was described as a lively boy who knew the area well. He had been known to play in the empty properties dotted around

the neighbourhood, a network of terraced streets near the centre of town.

Last July, he was reported missing after wandering off but returned home shortly afterwards. During the search, police tracker dogs and an aircraft were used. A patrol car also toured the area appealing for information by loud hailer.

Yesterday, children were still playing outside the boarded-up

house where Damian's body was found. A police car guarded the entrance to the back alley, but the only evidence of what had happened boy was a bunch of red carnations laid on the doorstep of the derelict house.

With the flowers was an In Sympathy card which read: "Damian – you will always be in our hearts and minds for ever. God is always with you. Rest in peace, from everyone."



Damian Williams: trapped

Labour set for rail buy-back

Labour has taken an important step towards a firm promise to restore Railtrack to public ownership, in response to what it argued were "black propaganda" stories that it had abandoned the plan, writes John Rentoul.

Railtrack will be floated on the Stock Exchange in May and John Prescott, the deputy Labour leader, is believed to be close to finalising a plan to acquire the company gradually in return for public subsidy.

News of the move emerged after Clare Short, Labour's transport spokeswoman, condemned stories in Saturday's newspapers that she had told Railtrack boss John Edmonds that Labour had scrapped plans for renationalisation.

"Railtrack chief executive John Edmonds phoned me to apologise about black propaganda that appeared in Saturday's papers and he pledged he was clear no such statement had been made," Ms Short said.

Philip Dewhurst, Railtrack's director of communications, denied planting the stories. He

said, of journalists who ask him about Labour policy: "I refer them to Clare Short."

Ms Short's deputy, Brian Wilson, accused Railtrack of planting the story in order to influence a meeting today between the Government's advisers Warburg and potential City investors. Equally, however, Labour is keen to disrupt May's flotation without promising to spend large sums of money in government.

It is understood that a committee chaired by Mr Prescott favours a plan to divert some of the taxpayers' subsidy from the train operators to Railtrack. But the plan also opens the possibility of the Government acquiring shares in Railtrack in return for subsidy which would have gone into the railway system in any case.

Labour urgently needs to resolve its detailed position on the 'sell-off' in the next few weeks, because prospectuses for the sale, to be published in March, will include a statement of the party's intentions.

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Wind chill could turn roads into ice rinks

Motoring organisations were last night bracing themselves for chaos on the roads today. Weather forecasters were predicting that the freeze would renew its grip on Britain, with icy winds sweeping in across eastern Europe to create "bitterly cold" conditions.

Yesterday's brief thaw left a lot of surface water – which the AA and RAC warned would freeze overnight to turn roads into ice rinks.

The London Weather Centre

said: "The temperature will struggle to get above freezing point, but with the wind chill factor it will feel like minus 10C or minus 12C."

The motoring organisations said the thaw had cleared most snow-blocked roads yesterday. Only minor roads in Scotland and the North-east remained closed, and conditions in Peak District passes were difficult, the RAC said.

The AA was predicting a blizzard of calls this morning, as

cars left idle over the weekend failed to start.

An AA spokesman said: "We are expecting a large number of breakdowns because we have got the worst weather for cars' electrical systems – very cold and wet."

Drivers should take extra care in the icy conditions, it added. "The advice is to do everything slowly – keep speeds down, don't stamp on the brakes, don't jerk the steering wheel. Leave extra time for your

journey and keep a good gap between you and the car in front."

After a night of temperatures well below zero, snow flurries were forecast to move in from the east coast and work their way westwards across the country, but no significant snowfall was expected, the London Weather Centre said.

Water companies dealt with an epidemic of burst pipes across the country over the weekend, the Water Services Association said.

0181 546 1102

Police find DNA link in hunt for 1960s killer

JOHN ARLIDGE
Scotland Correspondent

Detectives in Glasgow are to seek permission to exhume the body of a man they believe to be the notorious "Bible John" who murdered three women in the late 1960s.

Genetic fingerprinting techniques, which were not available 30 years ago, have established a link between the dead man, who is buried in Lanarkshire, and 29-year-old Helen Puttock who was murdered in 1969. The mother-of-two was one of three women killed after being picked up by a man - believed to be Bible John - at the popular Barrowland ballroom in the east end of the city.

Officers who carried out the initial investigation believed all three murders were committed by the man, who gained his nickname by quoting the Bible in conversation. Each victim was strangled after leaving the club. The killings, the first of which came in early 1968, led to the city's biggest ever manhunt, but the murderer dubbed the "Dance Hall Don Juan" remained at large.

The breakthrough came last year when forensic scientists and detectives at Partick police station began to re-examine the

case. They recovered traces of bodily fluid from Ms Puttock's clothing, and produced a DNA fingerprint. After checking 26-year-old suspect lists, officers identified a possible killer and performed DNA tests on close relatives. The genetic information from one relative proved to be a match.

The man detectives have identified used to frequent the Barrowland ballroom and visited the club on the night Ms Puttock's body was found. Police will not reveal his full name but he is understood to have been around 30 years old at the time of the killings. He committed suicide in 1980.

Although detectives have established a link between the dead man and Ms Puttock, no evidence is thought to have survived to connect him with the two other murdered women, Patricia Docker, 25, and Jemima McDonald, 32.

After their six-month investigation, police will this week ask the public prosecutor in Lanarkshire for permission to exhume the body for further tests. If the move is approved, digging will begin at dawn in accordance with ancient Scottish laws.

The breakthrough is a major coup for Scotland's largest police force and will help resolve one of Glasgow's most enduring murder mysteries.

In the first year of the police inquiry, more than 5,000 suspects were identified, but no one was charged.

The man they now suspect was the child of fanatical Christian parents, and grew up in Stonehouse before moving to nearby Newarthill. He married and had children but soon divorced. He served in the Scots Guards but left to become a furniture salesman in Glasgow, where he became a regular at the Barrowland. Clean-shaven, well-spoken and smartly-dressed, he attracted little suspicion. But reports suggest he was a loner who gambled, drank heavily and had a quick temper.



Helen Puttock: One of Bible John's three victims

Wartime mystery: Buried aircraft in French field holds key to how flying ace was downed



Pilot series: Douglas Bader climbing from his Spitfire in 1941 and the British fighter ace meeting German pilots after his capture



Photographs: Mike Pollard

Hunt for Bader's Spitfire leads to St Omer

RICHARD SMITH

A policeman believes he has found flying ace Sir Douglas Bader's crashed Spitfire which has lain buried in northern France for more than half a century and may hold the key to one of the mysteries of the Second World War.

The painstaking detective work by Dilip Sarkar could reveal what brought down Bader's aircraft in August 1941? Bader believed he collided with a German plane during a dogfight. As his Spitfire plummeted towards the ground Bader, who had lost both legs in a crash before the war - unstrapped one of his artificial limbs to bail out.

Mr Sarkar, 34, has discovered fragments of wreckage from the plane in a field at St Omer - three miles from the spot where Bader parachuted to the ground and was captured.

The policeman has spent a

year trying to trace the wreckage with Dr Bernard-Marie Dupont, who works at a hospital in Lille. Now they intend to mount Operation Dogbody - named after Bader's radio call sign - to recover the plane.

"They want to restore the Spitfire in Britain and take it back to France for display."

"The Spitfire came down from 24,000ft so it could be buried 15ft below ground," said Mr Sarkar, from Worcester. "Only five Spitfires were shot down in northern France that day and this was the only aircraft which crashed at St Omer."

"We've found eye witnesses who saw Bader parachute to the ground and traced the people who helped him escape from the local hospital - they still live in the same house where they hid him. One man even remembers playing as a child in the crater where the plane crashed."

"All the evidence points to

this being Bader's Spitfire but until we find a manufacturer's plate bearing the serial number W3185 we will not be absolutely sure."

"It's bound to be knocked about a bit but the soil in the Pas de Calais is quite soft. Its like going fishing - until you've been you don't know what you will catch. The fact that it's Bader's Spitfire is of paramount importance."

Mr Sarkar has interviewed British and German pilots who were involved in a huge dogfight which led to the capture of Britain's most famous flying ace on 9 August 1941.

Bader's "wing" blazed the trail as more than 100 Spitfires set off from Britain to attack the Gosnay power station in northern France.

At the time Bader claimed part of his Spitfire's tail disintegrated when he collided with a German aircraft which he had

not seen. Records show no German pilot claimed to have shot down Bader and although there were many anti-aircraft batteries in the area at the time none claimed to have shot down a Spitfire. German pilots' combat reports are inconclusive about how Bader was shot down.

Mr Sarkar intends to publish a book in October about Bader's wartime Spitfire wing which will throw new light on the mystery. "It was an incredibly huge dogfight with more than 70 German 109s in the vicinity," said Mr Sarkar.

"Air Vice Marshall Johnnie Johnson wrote in his log book 'more opposition than ever before'. Johnnie said he had never been so frightened in his life. He said there were so many German aircraft in the sky you didn't think about shooting anyone down - you just wanted to get the hell out of there."

It was a terrible mess - a complete maelstrom with planes just 50 yards apart."

Mr Sarkar has obtained previously unpublished pictures of Bader joking with German fighter pilots after he was captured. The Germans wanted to meet him so much they took him from the hospital in St Omer to their base in Audemert, northern France.

Bader was entertained there before being taken back to the hospital from where he escaped. He was later recaptured and remained a prisoner of war until 1945.

Mr Sarkar has spent 13 years working for West Mercia police. He is based in Malvern and has written five previous books on Spitfires and helped unearth the wreckage of more than a dozen wartime aircraft which crashed in Britain.

His interest in Bader came when at the age of eight he saw

the film *Reach for the Sky* which tells how Bader became the most famous pilot in the Battle of Britain after losing both legs aged 21.

"I used to watch my uncle make huge Spitfire models on the kitchen table and once I'd seen *Reach for the Sky* I was hooked," said Mr Sarkar.

"It's an awesome story because Bader had such pulverising dynamism. He was an extremely ambitious and charismatic man but his greatest strength was that he led by example - everyone tried to imitate his leadership."

Bader was born in 1910 and died in 1982. He joined the RAF as a cadet in 1928 and was well known for his dare devil stunts and acrobatics. He had his legs amputated in December 1931 after crashing while buzzing a fliers' clubhouse. He was invalided out of the RAF but returned when war broke out.

Ecstasy may have caused teenager's nightclub death

Police were yesterday sifting through records of hundreds of interviews they hope will shed light on the death of teenager Ben Nodes, who is believed to be the latest victim of ecstasy.

The 18-year-old collapsed and later died in toilets at a nightclub at Aldershot, Hampshire, early on Saturday. Ben was with a group of four other youths who had travelled from Bournemouth to attend an all-night party at the Rhythm Station club.

Police are investigating the possibility that the five may have taken ecstasy before arriving at the venue. A pathologist will carry out a post mortem examination today.

Officers interviewed 310 people at the Rhythm Station on Saturday night and distributed leaflets showing Ben's picture.

Detective Chief Inspector Steve Watts, who is leading the investigation, said: "We need to

go through the interviews before we know how much information we have got. We will have a better idea once we have done that."

Ambulance men called to the toilets at the club at 5am on Saturday were unable to save Ben's life and he was certified dead at the scene.

The five youths had travelled to the club to see the rave group, Fusion. Ben had been studying tourism at the Bournemouth and Poole College of Further Education.

His distraught parents were yesterday being comforted at the family home in Boscombe, Bournemouth.

Ben went to the toilets shortly after 3am and locked himself in one of the cubicles. Friends checked on him several times but police were called shortly before 5am, when he was found to have collapsed.

Inspector Nigel Hindle said

the death was being treated as suspicious and investigations centred on whether he had been taking drugs.

"At this stage it is too early for us to comment on the cause of the death but drugs will be a part of the investigation. We cannot comment further until we have the results of the post mortem examination," he said.

Club owner John Searchfield said of Ben's group: "Apparently, some of them bought ecstasy in the south coast area and took the tablets in the car before they entered the club."

He pledged to carry out more stringent checks in future. "We normally walk around the club and check the toilets regularly. We don't allow drugs in the club at all."

"Nothing like this has happened before," he said. "All I can do is prevent drugs from entering and prevent people taking drugs in the club."

"I cannot control what they do before they enter the premises."

In Devon, a teenager was rushed to hospital after it was feared he had taken ecstasy at a drugs awareness rave party, police said yesterday.

The 16-year-old, who has not been named, was among 250 youngsters attending the party at Exmouth Pavilions.

The event was the culmination of a drugs awareness day, organised by the Exeter Drugs Project.

Police said it had been suggested that the teenager, thought to have drunk a large amount of whisky and alcoholic lemonade, had then taken ecstasy.

The youngster, who is from the Exmouth area, was taken to hospital in Exeter and was later discharged.

He was due to be interviewed by police last night.

Bearded Socialists told: if you want to get ahead, get a shave

JOJO MOYES

New Labour is advising its parliamentary candidates to banish their beards, after polling revealed that facial hair can cost votes. But some Conservatives may actually benefit, according to one image consultant.

In training sessions across the country, TV executives advising Labour candidates on how to be telegenic are recommending that facial hair should be avoided where possible.

On this, New Labour is apparently in agreement with Margaret Thatcher and Hillary Clinton: voters regard hirsute politicians as "stuffy" and "radical". Research carried out in America shows that bearded candidates receive 5 per cent fewer votes than clean-shaven opponents.

"You only have to look at Peter Mandelson (Labour MP for Hartlepool and aide to Tony Blair) and his progression up

the career ladder," said a BBC insider. "He's gone from having a beard to a moustache to nothing at all. He's saying 'look, I've got nothing to hide'."

But according to image consultants, Conservative politicians - and Prime Minister John Major in particular - may actually benefit from a bit of facial hair. Anthea Yamey of The Image Consultancy said John Major should grow a moustache if he wanted to add gravitas to his image.

"I wouldn't advise him to grow a beard as he has a lot of shadow and it can look a little bit sleazy, a little bit Mafiosi. But a moustache carries a lot of different messages," she said. "If, like Mr Major, someone has a very large area between his nose and lips a moustache can look good."

Regular trimming, she warned, was essential: "The minute it covers the mouth it has a negative message. It's the

equivalent of someone putting their hand over their mouth when they speak." The safest option, she said, was definitely no facial hair at all.

Until the advent of TV, facial hair was adopted by most leading politicians as a means of enhancing authority. Gladstone, Disraeli, and Lloyd George, as well as Lenin, Stalin and Hitler boasted distinctive hirsute growths and a recent attempt by Lech Walesa to lose his moustache led to nationwide disgust and concern that it would affect investment in Poland.

The last bearded Cabinet minister in Britain was Labour's Sidney Webb in 1929. Labour is still the hairier party, with 33 of the House's 37 beards sprouting leftwards.

And dispelling the idea that voters find all bearded untrustworthy, Robin Cooke, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, Frank Dobson, shadow Environment Secretary and David

Blunkett, shadow Education Secretary all have a generous helping of facial hair.

But according to Mrs Yamey, they may have succeeded in spite of, rather than because of, their beards. "Robin Cooke's quite a small chap so a beard almost dominates him," she said. "He's got quite a lot going on in his face, with those big poppy eyes. He might benefit from having not quite as busy a beard," she said.

However, Ms Yamey warned that radical change can be dangerous. She knew of a man who had been advised to shave off his facial hair and "nearly had a nervous breakdown. He didn't know who he was anymore and had to grow it back."

This goes for the Prime Minister too. "I think it would be difficult for Mr Major to grow (a moustache). It would make people wonder about him and would be a very obvious attempt at getting more gravitas."

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news

'Intellectual Zorba' offers hope to mentally handicapped

LIZ HUNT
Health Editor

A clinic in Israel run by a 74-year-old Romanian, who produces "miraculous" improvement in mentally handicapped children, is attracting large numbers of families from Britain.

Professor Reuven Feuerstein, who has been dubbed an "intellectual Zorba" radiates an energy and humour that is hard for adults to resist and which children, many of them mentally handicapped, find captivating.

Every word is accompanied by an expansive gesture of his large hands and beneath his trademark beret, the large hooded eyes miss nothing. For

some children three months at the Hadassah-Wizo Canada Research Institute in Jerusalem have realised dramatic improvement, at least in the short term.

So what is the secret? Prof Feuerstein, a clinical psychologist and professor of physiology at Bar Ilan University School of Education, prefers the summary of his beliefs attempted by the French newspaper, *Le Monde*: "The chromosomes do not have the last word," it said.

Human intelligence, Prof Feuerstein argues, is not immutable. He refused to accept a low IQ as an indicator of a child's capacity to learn but sees it as a "very potent artefact of statistics". He sees it as a bar-



Mind over matter: Prof Feuerstein and his clinic in Jerusalem



Photographs: Reuter

rier to maximise that child's potential for development, an attitude that has condemned many of the mentally handi-

capped and emotionally disturbed to the "dustbins" of the education system.

"I totally reject the notion

that a child's intellectual development is fixed and static," Prof Feuerstein said in a recent interview. "The learning ca-

capacity of all individuals can change, regardless of their age or learning difficulties. This is one part of my theory. The other part is that, for a child to learn, the teacher must interpose herself between the child and his world so he can interpret it in a meaningful way. Instead of teaching content the teacher must extend, embellish and interpret the environment so that pupils build up an internal model of the world. This type of mediated learning allowed changes in learning ability."

His methods, known as the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment Programme (FIEP), have a wider application too; for brain damaged children and

adults, and normal, healthy individuals. FIEP has been adopted by schools and businesses throughout America, Asia, and Canada, aided by a BBC documentary on Prof Feuerstein. Although the British educational and psychological establishment have been slow to pick up his ideas, a charity, The Hope Committee for Children with Special Needs, is hoping to change that.

Prof Feuerstein settled in what was then Palestine in 1944 and developed his theories after working with children traumatised by the Holocaust, and newly arrived immigrants. His motivation was simple; six million had died, we could not afford to lose one more, he says

now. Conventional IQ tests indicated that thousands of these children were severely retarded and would require institutional care for the rest of their lives. He could not accept this. "...I could not accept them the way they were. I could not accept reality."

In 1965 Prof Feuerstein set up his research institute. This has become a Mecca for families with problem children. There are now 160 employees at the institute and satellite centres in over 30 countries. One goal is to help handicapped children live independent adult lives and many young adults with Down's Syndrome are now working as care-providers.

Union chiefs stake claim to Blair's 'big idea'

BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

Tony Blair faces considerable embarrassment over a confidential minute which reveals that union leaders were making the running over the idea of a "stakeholders' society" long before the Labour leader laid claim to it.

The document shows that the TUC held the first meeting of a "stakeholder task group" nearly a month before Mr Blair's "big idea" emerged in a speech to businessmen in Singapore on 8 January.

Union leaders first registered an interest in the concept at the end of October in a brainstorming session which decided to establish the task group.

On 13 December, at the first meeting of the working party, John Monks, TUC general secretary, offered the opinion that the Labour Party was "cautious" on the issue and that such reticence gave unions the opportunity to lead the way.

The Tories will seize on the revelations as the most concrete evidence yet that Mr Blair is following an agenda set by unions. Ministers have already denounced the slogan as a strong indication that Labour wants a return to the corporatism of the 1970s. Conservatives point to an article by Mr Monks in *The Times* in which he registered unions' determination to be a "stakeholder" on behalf of working people.

The minutes of the first task group meeting report Mr Monks as saying "stakeholding was a political and sensitive issue, which had raised considerable opposition, and on which the Labour Party was cautious. There was therefore an oppor-

tunity for trade unions to lead." In a remark which shows how far unions have come since the days when socialism was the political goal, Mr Monks then led a discussion on "what kind of capitalism we wanted".

Roger Lyons, chair of the group, said unions wanted to influence the discussions on "corporate governance" conducted by Shadow Cabinet members who are to present a paper to the party's next policy forum on the subject. "People at work want their interests reflected and it is not something which is necessarily taken on board by the Labour Party."

It was the responsibility of TUC unions to work out how employees would be involved in a stakeholder society, said Mr Lyons, who is general secretary of the union Manufacturing Science Finance, one of the party's biggest affiliates.

Mr Lyons said union leaders first heard the idea in a book by Will Hutton called *The State We're In*. "His analysis of the problem was very influential, but his prescriptions left a lot to be desired."

The task group has arranged a series of seminars on the subject culminating in a special conference of all unions during which the TUC's interpretation of the slogan will emerge.

The annual congress in September will also spell out what is required from such a society, Mr Lyons said.

The document sets out the aims of the TUC group which will be to "highlight the role of trade unions" and promote the concept to employers, investors, political parties and the media. It will also seek to "develop an analysis of the economic and social case for moving to a stakeholder society".

Bottoms up for women's rugby as military muscle lends some crucial support



Up and over: A member of the England Women's Rugby Union team is helped on her way by Army instructors at Arborfield Garrison, near Reading, as she takes part in an assault course exercise in preparation for a match against Wales on 4 February

Photograph: David Sandison

Child bride case returns to court today

The fate of child bride Sarah Cook could be decided today as lawyers in Britain and Turkey seek a solution after the failure of diplomatic attempts to persuade her back to Britain.

Thirteen-year-old Sarah, from Braintree, Essex, is refusing to budge and in a public show of defiance yesterday, kissed the Islamic holy book the Koran to reiterate her love for her adopted country.

She had two weekend meetings with her husband, 18-year-old unemployed waiter Musa Komeagac, in the prison in Kahrabamannaras in south-eastern Turkey, where he is on remand for marrying her in a religious ceremony in the town three weeks ago.

Her mother Jackie Cook, 37, and senior British diplomats had tried to get her to leave Turkey after the High Court in London

made her a ward of court last Wednesday.

Today, Sir Stephen Brown, president of the Family Division, will sit to hear a report from Essex social services and to see if Sarah has returned. He will make a decision after hearing from the Official Solicitor, appointed to look after Sarah's interests. Sarah's father, welder Adrian Cook, 42, may also be called to the court. The judge

can make a further order in the case or give the social services another seven weeks to complete a full report.

Any order he makes will not be enforceable in Turkey and the judge may choose to ask the Foreign Office to make official representations to the Turkish Government or ask the police to make an official approach to their opposite number. The situation is complicated because

Sarah is a witness in Musa's case which has been adjourned until 15 February, when he could be sent for trial at a later date.

The local law association will meet in the Mans region today to work out the legal implications of the case, which is unprecedented. Mrs Cook is Sarah's legal guardian in Turkey, but not now in England, where the court has taken over the responsibility.

Church 'must ordain' gay priests

ANDREW BROWN
Religious Affairs Correspondent

The Church of England will have to ordain gay priests openly, according to a newly influential Synod politician.

The Rev Dr Jeffrey John, a former Dean of Magdalen College, Oxford, was elected to the Church of England's General Synod at his first attempt last autumn, and has now been elected to the Synod's Standing Committee, which functions as a sort of cabinet.

"I don't think there is any alternative to the bishops' demanding discretion to ordain whoever they think fit," he said yesterday. "Probably more than half of them have been ordaining and supporting positively gay clergy for years."

In 1991, the House of Bishops issued a report claiming that homosexual practice was unacceptable among the clergy, though it might sometimes be condoned among the laity.

While Dean of Magdalen, Dr John wrote a pamphlet urging the church to recognise stable monogamous relationships among gay clergy. He was elected to the Synod as a clergy representative for Southwark, which covers London south of the Thames. The Diocese of London, north of the river, has the highest concentration of gay clergy in the country, but the gay subculture there is also tangled up with bitter Anglo-Catholic resistance to the ordination of women.

The Bishop of Southwark, the Rt Rev Roy Williamson, was last year expelled from an evangelical organisation, the Church Pastoral Aid Society, after he praised his gay clergy in a radio interview. Dr John represents a group known as "Affirming Catholicism", which he describes as "basically middle-of-the-road Catholics in favour of the ordination of women."

There is no love lost between his group and the traditionalist Anglo-Catholics, organised by Forward in Faith. Members of each accuse the other, off the record, of being homosexual front organisations.

Homosexuality is now the main battleground between traditionalists and liberals. The Lesbian and Gay Christian movement is planning a Synod debate on the subject, while next month, Walter Riegler, a retired Anglican bishop, will be tried for heresy before a church court in the United States, after he knowingly ordained a gay man in New Jersey.

Sellafield worker contaminated with plutonium

TOM WILKIE
Science Editor

A worker at British Nuclear Fuels' Sellafield reprocessing plant has so much plutonium inside his body that he may have exceeded the legal radiation dose limit.

The incident is sufficiently serious to have been reported directly to Government ministers,

as part of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (NII) "statement of nuclear incidents".

But investigators are unable to understand how the man, who has not been named, came to have swallowed or inhaled the plutonium.

The plutonium was detected in routine urine samples analysed during June and July last year. Further samples were

analysed in August, from which experts deduced that the man must have been exposed to the plutonium some time between January and June 1995. Faecal samples, however, failed to show any plutonium.

A spokesman for BNFL said the company was still investigating the incident but that "we don't expect full and detailed results until April or

May". An interim report will go to the NII by the end of the month, he said, which "will tell us whether he has breached the dose limits or not".

Plutonium is very difficult to detect once it is inside the body, even when enough is present to give the individual an excessive dose. Experts point out that if someone were to inhale plutonium dust, then a quanti-

ty totalling "something less than the size of a grain of sugar" would be sufficient to cause breach of safety limits.

The worker is described by BNFL as "an experienced individual" and has been re-assigned to non-radioactive duties, pending the final outcome of the investigation into his case. He had been working in the plutonium finishing plant at

the end of the reprocessing line which dealt with spent nuclear fuel from Britain's first generation Magnox reactors.

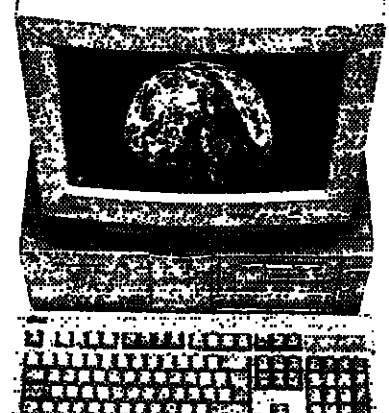
But a Sellafield spokesman said that he had spent most of his time in his office, in the control room, or at the operating face, which is isolated from sources of plutonium. No one else in the plant had shown signs of internal contamination and

there had been no incidents triggering plutonium-release alarms which could be related to the worker's exposure.

A spokesman for the NII said that plutonium existed in several forms which would affect the degree of risk.

If the plutonium were in an insoluble form, then "it can pass out easily and the prognosis would be good".

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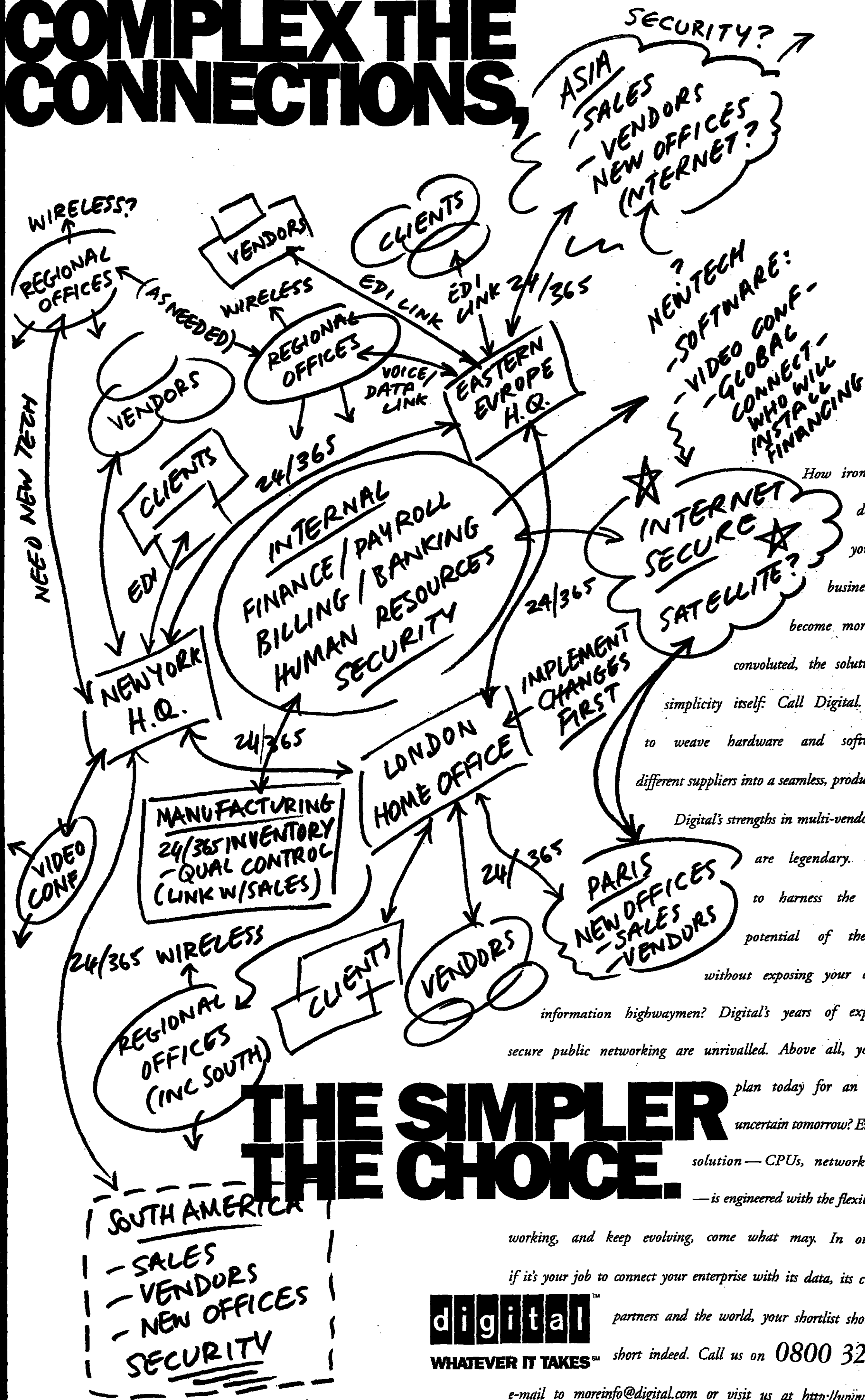
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Spate of rural murders blamed on gypsies

ALAN MURDOCH
Dublin

Gardai investigating two murders in remote parts of Ireland are examining the possibility that a violent gang based in Britain may be responsible.

Two elderly men living alone in Galway and Kerry were found murdered last week. Earlier this month gardai detained several people at Dublin preparing to board a ferry with a vehicle believed to

have been stolen from the home of an elderly woman in Co Tipperary. The line of inquiry involves suspects in the Irish gypsy community.

The attacks on farmers came in areas where emigration and cutbacks in the garda have left elderly people vulnerable to robbery. The murder of a 44-year-old woman last week in Milltown, Co Kildare, sparked a national outcry and put pressure on the justice minister Nora Owen to improve policing.

Last week's murders began with the separate killings of two farmers. The battered body of Patrick Daly, 69, was found dumped in a well near his 120-acre dairy farm near Killarney.

A post-mortem examination showed the bachelor died from massive head injuries. He may have been kicked and attacked with two blunt weapons.

Though there were no obvious signs of a break-in, it is known he withdrew a large sum of money from a building

society six days before his body was discovered. He had been dead since Saturday.

The body of Tommy Casey, 68, was found with his hands and feet tied, lying in a pool of blood on the kitchen floor of his run-down farmhouse at Oranmore, near Galway.

The killings follow a series of robberies in country areas. On 17 January an elderly Cork woman was attacked by two men in her home. In Co Clare an 87-year-old man was tied up

and robbed. The next day a woman of 81 was beaten by two men who ransacked her home.

On 3 January there were seven robberies of elderly people in the rural Midlands and West.

Chief Superintendent Tom Monaghan said suspects included a number of members of the travellers' community. He said: "I know that the vast majority of the travelling community are law-abiding and will condemn unreservedly those crimes. I am appealing to them

if they have any suspicions about who may be responsible to get in touch with us."

Detectives believe as many as 90 per cent of the robberies may all be the work of perhaps four groups of related travellers.

Adding to the widespread concern over violent crime in the republic was the discovery on Wednesday of the semi-naked body of Joyce Quinn, 44, who owned a grocer's shop at Milltown, Co Kildare.

package of measures to cabinet to strengthen garda effectiveness and ease the shortage of prison space. If approved this will allow construction of a new prison in Co Roscommon, deferred last year because of budget pressures.

Moving segregated republican prisoners from Portlaoise jail, where around 60 cells are vacant, will also create more space.

Mrs Owen intends decentralising garda command by

creating four autonomous regional divisions. The Taoiseach, John Bruton, last week complained of "an endless paper chase" of centralised bureaucracy in the force.

With space for just 2,200 inmates, Ireland has a chronic shortage of prison spaces, leading to widespread and controversial early releases. A liberal bail regime has also sparked anger over offences often committed by heroin addicts awaiting trial or sentence.

Howard victims' hotline falls flat

JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

A national telephone hotline for victims of crime - one of Michael Howard's "big ideas" - was used on just 238 occasions last year, it has been revealed.

The victim hotline was launched in November 1994 by the Home Secretary to enable victims to have a say in whether their attackers are released on parole or home leave.

Eight people in the Prison Service are trained to answer the Birmingham based helpline, which costs about £12,000 a year to run. The Prison Service stressed yesterday that the hotline team had other jobs to do when not answering calls.

Mr Howard, in a parliamentary written answer, has revealed they receive an average of less than five calls a week.

Probation workers said the figures showed the service was a badly thought-out "sham". Even Prison Service staff have privately admitted the scheme has little or no practical effect.

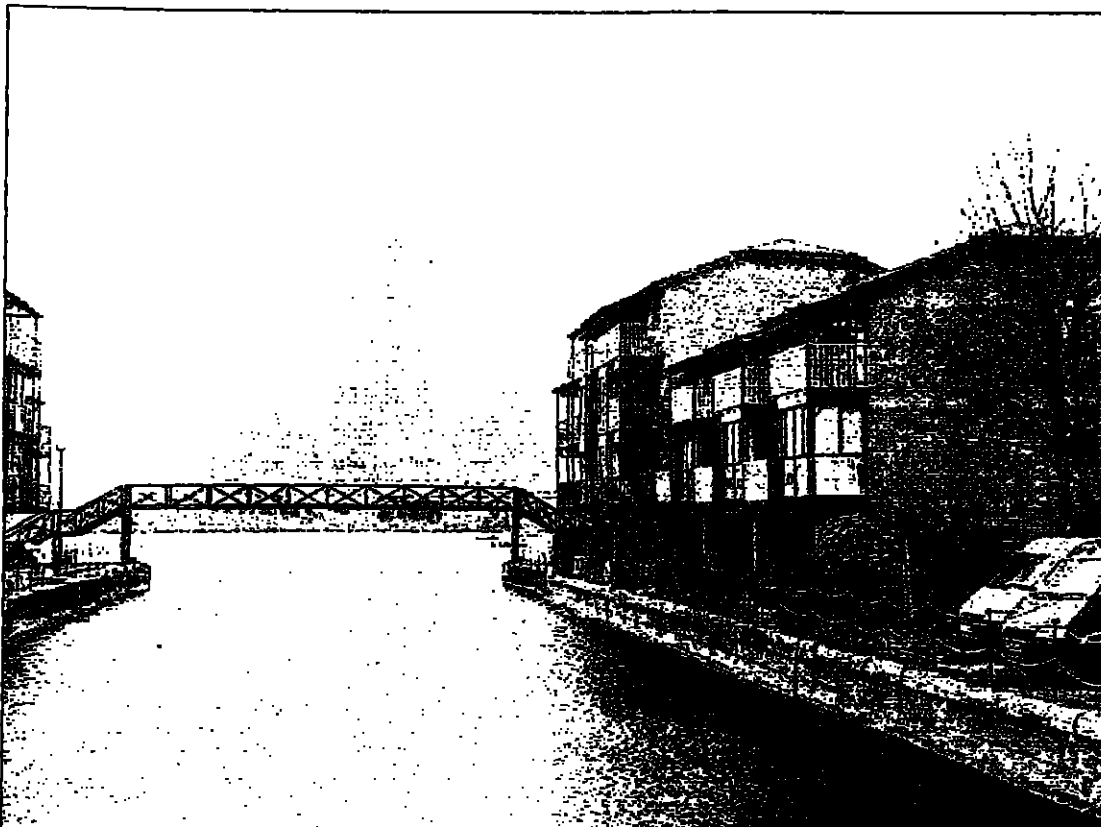
The service was condemned as soon as Mr Howard announced it. Lawyers, probation officers, prison governors and victims said it was "impractical", "unworkable" and "a breach of natural justice".

Under the scheme helpline staff pass on information to prison governors. However, with more than 100,000 home leave and parole decisions made a year, most victims are not informed about any imminent release. Of those who did ring most were concerned about sexual and violent offences.

Harry Fletcher, assistant general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, said: "The hotline was announced as a big idea but was minimally resourced. It never had any real influence, as the frequency of calls shows. The Home Secretary should offer real support to victims, not the sham of a hotline."

A Prison Service spokesman yesterday defended the helpline. "It is a valuable service to the families of victims and victims themselves," he said.

Housing shake-up: Suburban dream in decline as middle classes reverse decades of metropolitan exodus



Key to happiness: New homes in Docklands, east London, that are helping people move into the city (Photograph: David Sanderson) and the leafy suburban dream that is being swapped for inner-city vitality

Homeowners switching on to high life in the city

GLENDIA COOPER

The dream of a quiet middle class life in a semi-detached in suburbia is becoming a thing of the past. After 60 years of drift to the suburbs, metropolitan life is back in vogue with homeowners chasing the higher "fun factor" of the city centre.

Demand for city homes represents a major cultural change, says a report by a research group which predicts a shortage, particularly in London.

Geoff Marsh, author of the report, said: "People are choosing to swap their expensive, boring and uncomfortable commute from the suburbs for the efficiency and higher 'fun factor' of living as centrally as possible. London again is a trendy place to live and much safer than popular imagery would have you believe." The pattern is being repeated across England and Scotland: "People are wanting to move back into the inner cities because it is perceived that there is more energy there. There is a cultural change going on."

John Oxley knows why he deserted the leafy and tranquil suburbs of Richmond for London's city centre: "The quality of life is so much better."

Mr Oxley, partner in the chartered surveyors Allsop and Co, recently moved from near Richmond Park to a new house in Marylebone.

"There were all sorts of reasons why I moved", he said. "I'd been travelling into London from Richmond since 1976 and I'd gradually got more and more fed up with the delay. I was sitting in the car every day for between three-quarters of an hour and an hour just to get into work and it was extremely boring. It was such a waste of time and very tiring in the evenings. Public transport was no better. When you live in the centre you can walk to work. It's a lot more convenient and it just makes life easier. Something as simple as going to the theatre or cinema - it was difficult to do that in Richmond without rushing as I would normally not get home before 7.30 to 8... Now I have more choice. It's no trouble walking home or catching a very quick cab. The quality of life is so much better."

has been for moving outwards as city centre prices rose out of reach and fears grew about crime, traffic and pollution. But over the last few years the trend has been slowly reversing.

The population of the south London borough of Southwark had seemed in inexorable decline since its high point of 338,000 in 1951. But the trend was reversed in 1981 (when it had declined to 218,000) and has been steadily growing. The 1991 census recorded 227,000.

Move to quality street beats chore of commuting

CASE STUDY

ing. It was such a waste of time and very tiring in the evenings. Public transport was no better. When you live in the centre you can walk to work. It's a lot more convenient and it just makes life easier. Something as simple as going to the theatre or cinema - it was difficult to do that in Richmond without rushing as I would normally not get home before 7.30 to 8... Now I have more choice. It's no trouble walking home or catching a very quick cab. The quality of life is so much better."

During the 1980s boom, he said, a lot of well-off professionals had been tempted to move to the countryside but most moved back. "The problem is if you are travelling for a long time every day, how much time do you spend in the countryside?" he added. "I never used to have time to go to Richmond Park except at the weekends. Now I have the convenience of living in central London close to Regent's Park and at the weekends I can go out to Richmond Park or parts of the countryside with ease."

London has the added advantage in its role as an international city which is rapidly expanding. Tourism grew 11 per cent in the first five months of 1995 and London hotel rates are enjoying such high rates of occupancy that the London Tourist Board says 10,000 more rooms could be needed by 2000.

But the report warns that social housing will continue to suffer without a rationalisation of housing associations. At present they are major players in the market - there are nearly 50 associations building 4,353 units in 114 schemes in central London - but as state funding dries up they will have to compete with the private sector.

"Housing associations have found it particularly difficult to develop new homes in central London," the report adds. "This can only lead to even greater shortages of affordable housing in central and inner London."

Leading article, page 12

WIN A PORSCHE BOXSTER

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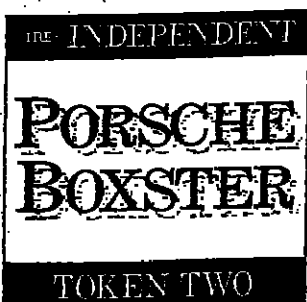
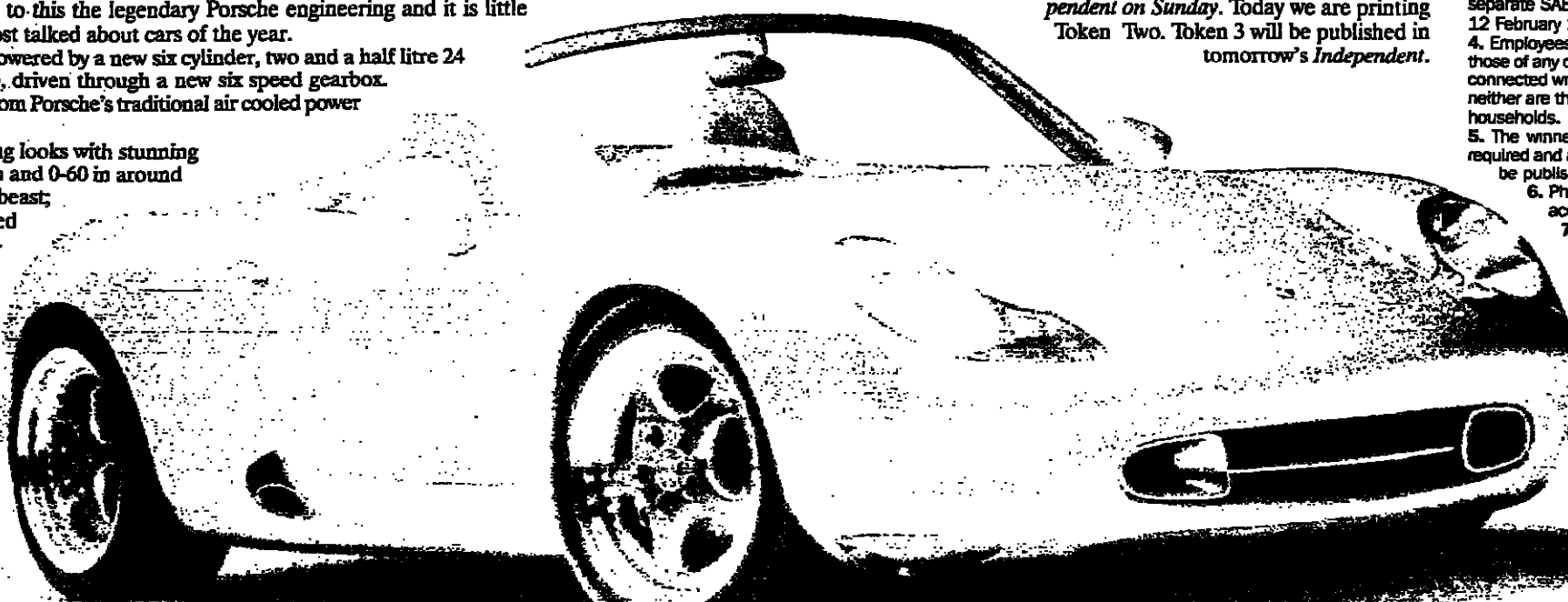
A genuine two seater sports car, the Boxster's retro body styling and fine detail combine for a visually stunning car. Add to this the legendary Porsche engineering and it is little wonder that this is one of the most talked about cars of the year.

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The production Boxster may differ slightly from the prototype shown here but it is sure to be a real head-turner.

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Rules:

1. To enter our Porsche Boxster prize draw you need to collect five differently numbered tokens from the eight we will be printing (including a starter token which can be used as any number).
2. The closing date for entries is 23 February 1996. Send to: The Independent/Porsche Boxster Prize Draw, PO Box 250, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 1TU along with a completed entry form which will be printed on Saturday 3 February.
3. For previously published tokens or an entry form send a SAE to: The Independent/Porsche Boxster/Token Request or Entry Form, PO Box 83, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 1TU. Only 2 tokens are available per application. If you require both tokens and a form, please send separate SAEs. Requests must be received by first post 12 February 1996.
4. Employees and agents of Newspaper Publishing Plc or those of any other national newspaper company or any firm connected with the promotion are not eligible to take part, neither are their relatives nor members of their families or households. Entrants must be aged 18 or over.
5. The winner must co-operate for publicity purposes if required and accept that his/her name and photograph will be published in the paper.
6. Photocopies of tokens and entry forms are not acceptable.
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8. No correspondence will be entered into. Proof of postage will not be accepted as proof of receipt. The promoter will not take responsibility for entries lost or damaged in the post. The Editor's decision is final.
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10. The Porsche Boxster should be available in November 1996, but is dependent on production dates.

Promoter: Newspaper Publishing Plc, One Canada Square, London E14 5DL

international

Du Pont drama: 'Lunatic' heir to chemical empire holds Swat teams at bay after murder on estate

Millionaire gunman under siege

JOHN CARLIN
Washington

John Eleuthere du Pont, an heir to one of America's largest fortunes, was much loved by the police at Newtown Square, the town neighbouring his 800-acre Pennsylvania estate.

An Olympic-quality marksman who counts an armoured personnel carrier among his possessions, he has provided officers with free instruction at his private shooting range over the years and bought them bullet-proof vests. In the 1970s he was authorised by local police chiefs to go on patrol wearing a badge and full uniform.

Yesterday members of the same police department were laying siege to Mr du Pont's mansion after issuing a warrant for his arrest for the murder of

David Schultz, a friend he allegedly shot twice through the chest on Friday. Mr du Pont has been in regular telephone contact with the police but has so far refused to give himself up.

Since Friday evening 75 officers, including 30 Swat team sharpshooters, have been surrounding the mansion, which is built in the style of Ancient Greece and is believed to contain a substantial arsenal of weapons. Their orders so far have been to do nothing. "We are employing patience," a police spokesman said. "We will wait as long as it takes."

Mr Schultz, a wrestler aged 36 who won a gold medal at the 1984 Olympic Games, lived with his wife and two children in one of the 50 houses on Mr du Pont's estate. The two men were brought together by Mr du

Pont's love of wrestling. Against the advice of friends, Mr Schultz had been training for this year's Atlanta Olympics at a vast sports facility - called by some visiting athletes "the Funny Farm" - on the Du Pont property.

Nick Gallo, who had known Mr Schultz since 1976, said Mr du Pont had turned paranoid in recent months. "He accused Dave of crawling through the walls and spying on him in the mansion," Mr Gallo said in an interview with *Newsday* newspaper. "He even asked Dave if he was masquerading as his dog. He thought Dave was the dog. The guy was a lunatic, and everyone knew it but did nothing about it - because of his generosity."

Mr du Pont, 57, has channelled most of his donations into



Happier days: Du Pont with the bearded Schultz

sport but he is also keen on nature, a passion possibly inherited from his mother, who used to raise Welsh ponies. The Delaware Museum of Natural History, which includes among

its treasures a collection of two million sea shells, was built with his money.

"The thing about the Du Ponts," one family member told *Forbes* magazine a few years back, "is that some are very, very rich, and others are just plain old rich." The man under siege, who with a fortune of \$46m (£30m) belongs to one of the family's more modest branches, is the great-grandson of Eleuthere Irenee du Pont, a Frenchman who fled to the United States after the Revolution and in 1802 founded a gunpowder business in Delaware. After the First World War, when business was so good that the Du Ponts became known as "the Merchants of Death", the company expanded into chemicals, rubber and synthetic fibres. (One book on

the family is titled *Behind the Nylon Curtain*.)

Martha du Pont, Mr du Pont's sister-in-law, told the Associated Press that she had been alarmed for some time by his growing eccentricity. "It's so hard to help someone today because of the laws," she said. "You used to be able to go into court and get someone committed but now you can't."

One opportunity to commit Mr du Pont was provided 10 years ago when he drove up to one of the homes on his estate in a tank, knocked on the door and asked the man of the house if he wanted to come out and play. In the absence of playmates he has often been spotted alone in recent years driving another expensive toy, his armoured personnel carrier, around the estate's grounds.

Gramm takes aim at the booming debt

RUPERT CORNWELL
Manchester, New HampshireTHE US
PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTIONS '96

Three words sum up Senator Phil Gramm, the presidential candidate: guns, God and the budget. Guns of course means the National Rifle Association, over the years his biggest single source of contributions. God stands for his rigid anti-abortion stance, with which he woos the religious right. But currently the most important is the budget: the one issue which may yet revive his ebbing political fortunes.

Mr Gramm is not a man who inspires instant affection. But one thing must be said of him: he has never disguised his

White House ambitions. Almost from the day Bill Clinton took office in 1993, he's been warning states like New Hampshire and Iowa. But nowhere is he running better than 15 per cent, and here he has sunk to single figures. Well-funded and single-minded, he was supposed to be the conservative alternative to Bob Dole. Instead, he must vie for the Christian and social right vote with the commentator Pat Buchanan, and is losing the radical economic argument to the upstart Steve Forbes.

Mr Gramm's stump style is a mirror of the man: unsuited, persistent and uncompromising. He peers at his target through thick gold-rimmed glasses before making his pitch in a thick Texan drawl. Other candidates drop hints about Mr Dole's advanced years. Mr Gramm goes for the jugular, accusing the Senate leader of being a trimmer, a compromiser whose word is worth no more than the odds of cutting a legislative deal in a back room.

"Mr Dole cannot beat President Clinton, but I can," he argues - by appealing to conservative Democrats, just as he did when he switched parties in the early 80s, resigned his seat and then retained it.

Would that it were so easy now. Take Arizona, which is supposed to be prime Gramm territory and holds its primary on 27 February. Mr Forbes is actually leading there. Belatedly Mr Gramm has espoused the flat tax, which has catapulted Mr Forbes to celebrity, at an even lower rate of 16 per cent but offset by enough spending cuts to preserve the balanced budget.

The budget is his most powerful card. The national debt, he says, now stands at \$18,700 per head: "If I don't balance the budget in my first term, I will not run for a second." Audiences listen with respect - but without real fervour.

"I was a foot-soldier in the Reagan revolution," Mr Gramm loves to claim. But he is hardly a happy warrior. True,

he has something of the Great Communicator's knack of a catchy phrase - but a hard, unforgiving edge as well. "People who are sitting in the car should get out and pull with everyone else," is a favourite Gramm line on welfare. But Mr Forbes, the nearest approximation of Reagan in the race, blithely trumps him: "The genius of America is finding better ways to pull."

New Hampshire is not choice Gramm territory. It should be, given its abhorrence of taxes and obsession with a balanced budget. But the Senator slighted it by campaigning in other states, jealous of New Hampshire's influence, which have moved their primaries forward. That probably cost him a precious



Phil Gramm: Unsuitable and persistent campaign style

endorsement from Governor Steve Merrill, who has now cast in his lot with Mr Dole.

But the risk is finely calculated. Mr Gramm's strategy is clear: Do well in the largely overlooked Louisiana caucuses on 6 February to offset a possibly poor showing in Iowa, where Mr Dole should cruise to victory; then neutralise a bad finish here with a win or strong second in Delaware. That, he reckons, should keep his candidacy credible until the primaries move to friendlier territory in the South.

And so, undeterred, Phil Gramm continues. Last weekend he was in Memphis, singing gospel music at the "National Affairs Briefing" conference of Christian activists and committing himself anew to a constitutional outlawing of abortion. And he should never be underrated. "Yuck," is how Wendy Lee Gramm describes her first reaction to her future husband. Could his courtship of Republican voters yet yield the same result?

Old foes join hands to bring 'last hope' to Bosnia

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Prijedor, Bosnia

Russia's special representative to Nato, Colonel-General Leonty Shevtsov, had a blunt message for his troops deploying in northern Bosnia yesterday. The 60,000-strong peace implementation force I-FOR, to which Russia is contributing a brigade of about 1,600 troops, is, he said, "the last hope for the people here". But there is another message in the Russian presence: it is a chance for the Russian army to redeem itself after the debacle in Chechnya.

The relationship between the Russians and Nato was always sensitive, and the command relationships have still not been fully resolved. General Shevtsov said yesterday that Russian officials, including General Pavel Grachev, the Defence Minister, would be coming to Bosnia to work out the final details of their relationship with the Americans.

The Russians are taking over a sector of northern Bosnia under control of the US-led division based in Tuzla, although General Shevtsov said important issues will still be referred to Moscow. The Russian bases lie north of the desolate "zone of separation" - a four-kilometre-wide strip separating the former warring factions, now totally cleared of weaponry and troops. Driving north from Tuzla, you encounter a US checkpoint at one side of the zone and the first Russian checkpoint on the other side. In the next two to three days, the Russians will take over from the Americans in the whole area.

At the Russian base at Prijedor, north of the zone of separation, we were met by Major Alexander Dementyev, 35, an officer in the airborne forces and commander of one of the two main Russian battalions - each 400-strong. From Kostroma, north-east of Moscow, he had been in the army since he was 18, and served two years in Afghanistan. He had arrived a week before, on board a train through Hungary and into Bijeljina.

Major Dementyev was about to show us around, when another officer rushed up. "Sir, it's Shevtsov,"

General Shevtsov, a stocky



Queuing for freedom: Bosnian Serb prisoners of war are transferred from Bosnian government custody to a French I-FOR truck at Sarajevo airport. The government released 74 Serb prisoners from Travnik while the Serbs freed 76 prisoners from Foca

Photograph: Jacqueline Arz/AP

man wearing a huge peaked cap with a Russian double-headed eagle above its Soviet-vintage star, was accompanied by Major General Staskov, the deputy commander of the elite airborne troops now responsible for peace-keeping. The Bosnia contingent all wear a badge saying "Peace-keeping" (*Mirovotchestvo*). Troops of the Russian Airborne Forces - Bosnia, with a Nato star cunningly coloured in pink and blue.

General Shevtsov addressed the troops. "You are the last hope for the people here. The UN came and wasted everyone's money. Now it is up to you," he said.

Behind General Shevtsov was Colonel Alexander Lentsov,

commander of the Russian brigade. A huge man, he grabbed one of the soldiers and bawled him out for looking scruffy. But Col Lentsov, an Afghanistani veteran like Major Dementyev, was pragmatic - and shrewd. Asked if the Russians expected peace-keeping to be their army's main job over the next few years, he said: "It depends: if this goes well, everyone will say yes; if not, if there's blood all over the place, then no."

We gave Major Dementyev a lift in our Lada four-wheel drive to an American position further west where a 120-strong company of Airborne Rangers were well dug in.

Captain John Lightner, the company commander, ap-

peared and I found myself acting as interpreter. "I will show the Russian battalion commander round our positions," said Capt Lightner, and asked Major Dementyev when he expected to take over.

"When do you expect to take over?" "Maybe three days," said the major, "but my troops are ready now." Capt Lightner explained: "We're building a new first position here to put fire on that slope there. We have early warning devices we use to cover approaches that are difficult to see."

"They are what we call tripflares," the Russian replied.

Like the Russians at their checkpoint on the separation zone, the Americans had made

themselves as comfortable as possible they could.

The Russians had tents three layers of fabric thick, and field bakeries which also provided heat. The Americans had rigged up weights in mineral water bottles to ensure the doors were pulled shut.

"We have two mortars here, firing in opposite directions," said Capt Lightner. "There are mines here. I walked over there on 20 January. The local Serb battalion commander, Captain Mejor, told me there were no mines there but we haven't checked it."

One of the features of the roads around Tuzla are the American "Hummers" - the wide high-mobility vehicles. Major Dementyev had not yet

seen one.

"That's a Hummer, yes?"

"Yes."

"Like Arnold Schwarzenegger uses, yes?"

The super-power contingents burst into laughter.

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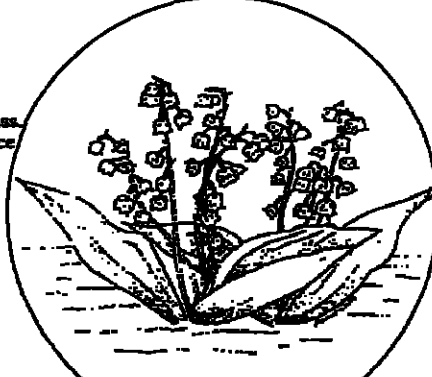
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Ramm takes aim at the looming debt

Photograph: Reute.

Mr. Goldberg, who moved to Israel seven years ago from Texas, appeared to lack a strong command of the Hebrew language and his mistakes sent his client and a packed courtroom into bursts of laughter.

They do admit that the resumption of tests was poorly handled in terms of public opinion, with the Foreign Ministry emphasising it was a prelude to a total ban on testing while the Defence Ministry was more concerned to promote the idea that the tests would ensure that France would remain a major nuclear power.

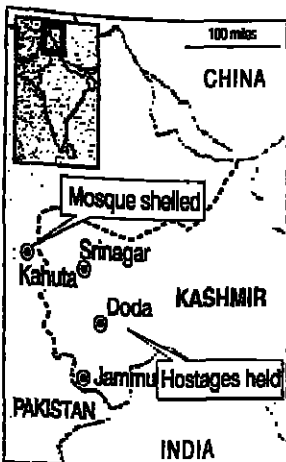
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international

Border firing raises Kashmir tension

TIM MCGIRK
New Delhi
MUKHTAR AHMED
Srinagar

Heavy firing raged along the disputed border between India and Pakistan in the Himalayan region of Kashmir yesterday, with both sides exchanging mortar and machine-gun fire for the seventh day.

At least 22 people were killed inside Pakistan when a rocket crashed into a mosque during Friday prayers, in what diplomats in Islamabad and New Delhi are calling a dangerous escalation of hostilities. Presi-

dent Farooq Leghari said Pakistan would respond to the rocket attack. India on Saturday successfully tested Super Prithvi, a long-range missile capable of delivering a nuclear warhead. All of Pakistan's cities fall within the range of Indian missiles. Both countries are thought to have nuclear arms.

Indian officials said Pakistani troops yesterday opened fire on seven border outposts, injuring seven civilians. India claims that that fighting erupted when Pakistani troops tried to provide covering fire to enable Kashmiri separatist guerrillas to slip across the snowy mountain bor-

der. A defence spokesman said, "The firing by the Pakistanis may have been to divert attention to push in more militants."

Militants who claim to represent the Muslim majority in Kashmir are waging a six-year uprising against Indian forces. India accuses Pakistan of aiding the Kashmiri factions.

Meanwhile, India claims to have restored ties with militant kidnappers holding four Westerners — the Britons Paul Wells, 23, from Nottingham and Keith Mangan, 33, from Tooting, and an American and a German. Talks were broken off by the Al-Faraj captors in

November when India refused to exchange jailed Kashmiri militants for the tourists.

The Independent has learnt that the militant kidnappers have moved the hostages. Police sources claim that the four were taken on a two-day march over the mountains into the more temperate Doda district, not far from the main Jammu-Srinagar highway.

In Srinagar, a police official said: "The heavy snowfall and the biting cold must have forced the militants to enter Doda. Earlier, the American tourist was suffering from severe frostbite, and we feel that must

have also forced Al-Faraj to shift them."

All four captives were sighted by villagers several days ago in Kishtwar, a forest-covered region which is a stronghold for Kashmir separatists. "They were exhausted but trying to keep pace with their captors," said one police official.

The Al-Faraj group is said to be extremist in its Islamic views, and many of the kidnappers are Afghan warriors who consider the Kashmir Muslims' battle against the primarily Hindu Indian security forces to be nothing less than a jihad (holy war). The westerners,

now in their seventh month of captivity, had little idea of this vicious conflict when they set out trekking last summer in Kashmir. Their accompanying wives and girlfriends were freed.

Indian authorities, with British, US and German diplomats in Srinagar, pin their hopes on new mediation being carried out by a respected Kashmiri militant leader, Yassin Malik, from the Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front. He has backing from the major militant organisation, the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, which recently established links with a key Al-Faraj commander.

IN BRIEF

Niger coup leaders incur French wrath

Niamey — Army officers in Niger followed Sierra Leone and staged West Africa's second coup of 1996, saying political squabbling threatened economic reforms. But they incurred the wrath of France, the former colonial power and main aid partner. The officers, who named the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-Colonel Ibrahim Bare Mainassara, as leader of the Muslim country yesterday, said the aim of Saturday's coup was to allow a fresh start, not to end multi-party democracy. But the French foreign ministry called for a return to constitutional order and suspended co-operation. President Mahamane Ousmane and the Prime Minister, Hama Amadou, rivals in a power struggle, are in detention. *Reuters*

Hostage alert

Sanaa — Troops might intervene to free French hostages held by tribesmen in Yemen. "This will be the last round of negotiations and if they continue to insist on their conditions we might use force to release the hostages," the Marib Governor, Abdel Wali al-Shamiri, said. *Reuters*

HK force groomed

Peking — The People's Liberation Army said it had completed the elite Red First Regiment that will raise China's flag over Hong Kong in July next year. The force of ground, naval and air units will enter "at zero hour on 1 July 1997", Major-General Liu Zhenwu, its commander, said. *Reuters*

Oleksi boost

Warsaw — A day after he resigned as prime minister in a spying scandal, Josef Oleksi was elected leader of the former Communists in a strong show of support on Saturday. The leadership post has been vacant since Aleksander Kwasniewski renounced membership in the Democratic Left Alliance after his victory in the 19 November presidential elections. *AP*

Socialists united

Madrid — In a strong show of solidarity, the ruling Socialists confirmed the former Interior Minister Jose Barrionuevo as an election candidate despite his indictment in connection with an alleged "dirty war" on Basque separatists. *AP*

Defiant Swazis

Mbabane — Swazi trade unions defied King Mswati's order to end a week-long general strike and renewed a demand for the lifting of a 23-year ban on political parties. The Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions secretary-general, Jani Sithole, said the strike would continue until the ban was lifted. *Reuters*

Challenger tribute

Washington — On the 10th anniversary of their deaths in an explosion, the bravery and patriotism of the seven-member crew of the space shuttle Challenger "remain constant, as fixed as the North Star," President Clinton said on Saturday. *AP*

Monarchy a key poll issue for Keating

ROBERT MILLIKEN
Sydney

Undeterred by his status as Australia's perennial political underdog, Paul Keating will set out this week to sell voters his plan to ditch the monarchy as part of his campaign to win an unprecedented sixth term in office for his Labor Party.

Even as the Prime Minister, who has called an election for 2 March, embarked on a gruelling five-week campaign, the pollsters were predicting the end of Labor's record 13-year reign in Canberra. An opinion poll yesterday put Labor 8 points behind the opposition Liberal-National coalition, which needs a national swing of only 0.5 per cent to sweep the government from power.

Mr Keating himself has fallen behind John Howard, the opposition leader, in personal ratings after leading in opinion polls for much of last year. In the Northern Territory, the only place in Australia where betting on elections is permitted, bookies make the opposition firm favourites, offering odds of 2-1 for a coalition win against 5-4 for a Labor victory.

But that is precisely what the polls said three years ago when Mr Keating called an "unwinnable" election as Australia was emerging from a recession

which many voters thought was his fault. He went on to defy everyone and increase Labor's majority.

Mr Keating's problem this time is that Labor has been in power since the early Eighties, and many Australians feel the government is suffering from fatigue.

Although the economy has recovered steadily, unemployment at 8 per cent is still disturbingly high, having fallen from 11.3 per cent at the time of the last election. Foreign debt has exploded to record levels. Strikes, which the government had almost wiped out, have begun to re-emerge. Business leaders complain that the government has not been tough enough in pushing through its industrial relations reforms.

Yet there is little to choose between the two main parties in policy terms. The conservative Liberal Party, the senior partner in the coalition, has seen Labor steal and expand on most of its free-market economic policies over the past decade.

During the campaign, Mr Keating will push his pledge for a referendum to turn Australia into a republic by 2001, the centenary of federation. Opinion polls suggest that this will be a winner. Mr Howard, an avowed monarchist, has been forced to drop his strident opposition to the republican cause, although he has yet to spell out how he will handle the issue.

The contest is likely to boil down to a test of leadership. While Australians do not like Mr Keating, they grudgingly respect him as a strong leader who has never pandered to personal popularity polls. And, while Mr Howard might be right when he said that "many millions of Australians are aching for change", it remains to be seen whether they are ready to swap Keating for the colourless, uncharismatic Howard.



Common ground: Louis Farrakhan and Nelson Mandela agreed on fundamental issues including opposition to injustice and oppression

Mandela preaches tolerance to Farrakhan

ROBERT BLOCK
Johannesburg

Louis Farrakhan, head of the Nation of Islam in the US, and Nelson Mandela, President of South Africa, stood side by side yesterday on the porch of Mr Mandela's Johannesburg house and proclaimed they were like two peas in a pod.

"All of the principles that President Mandela outlined [to us] we agree with totally. Islam is a religion which, if practiced, disallows racism, racism, injustice, tyranny and oppression," said the controversial Muslim cleric after his meeting

with Mr Mandela. President Mandela is widely regarded as an almost saintly figure, a man whose emphasis on reconciliation has ensured the success to date of South Africa's democratic transformation.

Before Mr Farrakhan even touched down on South African soil yesterday, the mere mention of his visit generated huge controversy among white South Africans, who feared the minister wanted to spread his divisive doctrine here.

The sparks flew when it was announced late last week that Mr Mandela had agreed to Mr Farrakhan's request for a meet-

ing. There was dismay in white liberal quarters as well as in right-wing circles that Mr Mandela was willing to be seen with such a controversial figure.

The neo-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement said the planned meeting unmasked the President's "anti-white" sentiments. A Jewish student group accused Mr Mandela of being insensitive to the feelings of the largely pro-ANC Jewish community. But the President defended his position yesterday.

"As the leader of ANC and as President of this country I have accommodated a wide range of views," he said.

"I have seen not only people with whom I agree [but] I have met people and had discussions with those whose views are diametrically opposed to my own. I saw no reason to exclude Mr Farrakhan."

Mr Mandela did not appear to pull any punches with Mr Farrakhan, and left the impression he lectured him on the need for tolerance.

During his visit Mr Farrakhan intends to visit black townships, squatter camps and Muslim leaders. Most black South Africans seem to have supported Mr Mandela's decision to meet him.

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Contradictions at the heart of Europe

Can the European Union survive the crippling cost of Maastricht and the rows to come over admitting the countries to the east, asks Perry Anderson

On New Year's Day 1994, Europe changed names when the dozen nations of the Community took on the title of EU. Was anything of substance altered? So far, very little. The member states have risen to 15. Otherwise things are much as they were. What is new, however, is that everyone knows this is not going to last. For the first time since the war, Europe is living in anticipation of vast but still imponderable changes. Three dominate the horizon.

The first is the Maastricht treaty. The core of the treaty is the commitment of all the member states, save Britain and Denmark, to introduce a single currency under the authority of a single central bank by 1999. This step means an irreversible move towards federation. With it, national governments will lose the right to issue money and to alter exchange rates, and will only be able to vary rates of interest and public borrowing within narrow limits, on pain of heavy fines from the Commission if they break central bank directives. European monetary union spells the end of the most important attributes of national economic sovereignty.

Second, Germany is reunited. The original Common Market was built on a balance between the two largest countries of the six, France and Germany – the latter with greater economic weight and slightly larger population, the former with superior military and diplomatic weight. Later, Italy and Britain provided flanking states of roughly equivalent demographic and economic size. A decade later, Germany's position has been transformed. With a population of more than 80 million, it is now much the largest state in the EU, enjoying monetary, and increasingly institutional and diplomatic, ascendancy. For the first time in its history, the process of European integration is confronted with the emergence of a hegemonic power.

The third great change has followed from the end of Communism in the former Warsaw Pact. Virtually all the East European countries, and some of the former Soviet lands, want to join the EU. As things stand, the population of these candidates is about 130 million. Their inclusion would make a community of half a billion people, nearly twice the size of the United States. It would approximately double the membership of the EU to some 30 states. A completely new configuration would be at stake.

Historically, these three great changes have been interconnected. In reverse order, it was the collapse of Communism that allowed the reunification of Germany that precipitated Maastricht. These develop-

ments pose dramatic dilemmas. The final shape of the bargain reached at Maastricht was of essentially French and German design. The central aim for Paris was a financial edifice capable of replacing the unilateral power of the Bundesbank as the *de facto* regulator of the fortunes of its neighbours, with a *de jure* central authority over the European monetary space in which German interests would no longer be privileged. In exchange, Bonn received the security system of "convergence criteria" – in effect, draconian conditions for its abandonment of the Deutschmark.

In a system of the kind envisaged at Maastricht, national macro-economic policy becomes a thing of the past. The historic commitments of both social and Christian democracy to full employment and traditional welfare services, already scaled down or cut back, would cease to have any purchase. This is a revolutionary prospect. The supranational monetary authority, elevated higher

It will be France, rather than Germany, that will decide the fate of European monetary union

above national electorates than its predecessors, will be more immune from popular pressures, it seems.

That is not inevitable, however. The project might create an equally powerful force moving in the opposite direction. Misgivings about what the kind of single currency envisaged by Maastricht might mean for socio-economic stability are widely shared, even among central bankers. With nearly 20 million people out of work in the EU, what is to prevent huge permanent pools of unemployment in depressed regions? The Governor of the Bank of England now warns that, once devaluations are ruled out, the only mechanisms of adjustment are sharp wage reductions or mass out-migration. Alexander Lamfalussy, head of the European Monetary Institute, has warned that if monetary union is to work, a common fiscal policy is essential.

Budgets remain the central battleground of domestic politics. How can there be fiscal co-ordination without electoral determination through a genuine supranational democracy? And this must embody for the first time a popular sov-

eignty in an effective and accountable European Parliament. It is enough to spell out this condition to see how unprepared either official discourse or public opinion in the member states is for the scale of the choices before them.

What will be the position of Germany in the Europe envisaged at Maastricht? It was not merely the hopes or fears of bankers and economists that accelerated monetary union. Ultimately, more important was the political desire of the French government to fold the newly enlarged German state into a tighter European structure. In Paris, the creation of a single currency under supranational control was conceived as a critical safeguard against the re-emergence of German national hegemony in Europe. No sooner was the treaty signed, however, than the opposite prognosis was heard: it would merely extend German power. Just this fear was the mobilising theme of the campaign against ratification of Maastricht in the French referendum.

This referendum revealed the depth of the division in French opinion over the likely consequences of a single currency: would it lead to a Europeanised Germany or to a German Europe? The victory of Jacques Chirac in the subsequent presidential elections guarantees that the tension will continue to haunt the Elysée. For no French politician has so constantly oscillated from one position to the other, or opportunistically reflected the divided mind of the electorate itself. The domestic course of the Chirac regime can only tighten already explosive pressures in the cities at the cost of its electoral credibility, on which that of its *franc fort* exchange rate also depends. The regime's slump in the opinion polls is without precedent in the Fifth Republic. An image of zealous compliance with directives from the Bundesbank involves high political risks.

Nevertheless, it will be France rather than Germany that decides the fate of monetary union. Germany cannot back out of Maastricht. France can. There will be no EMU if Paris does not cut its deficit. The French political class is still no surer that the single currency will deliver what it was intended to. Germany bound – or unbound?

Finally, what of the prospects for extending the EU to the east? On the principle itself there has been no dissent among the member states. It might also be added that there has been no forethought. For the first time in the history of European integration, a crucial decision has been set, not by politicians or technocrats but by public opinion. But on apply-



ing the principle, the three leading states of Western Europe have divided. From the outset, Germany has given priority to the rapid inclusion of Poland, Hungary, the former Czechoslovakia and, more recently, Slovenia. Within this group, Poland remains the most important in German eyes.

France, more cautious about the tempo of widening, has been less inclined to pick regional favourites. Its initial preference, articulated by Mitterrand, was for a generic association between Western and Eastern Europe as a whole, outside the framework of the EU. Britain, on the other hand, has pressed for the most extensive embrace. Alone of Western leaders, John Major has envisaged the ultimate inclusion of

Russia. The rationale for the British position is unconvincing: the wider the EU becomes, the shallower it must be, for the more national states it contains, the less viable is any supranational authority over them.

In so far as the EU has sketched a policy at all, it goes in the direction set out by Germany's ruling party. Given, however, that a widening of some kind to the east is now enshrined as official, if still nebulous, policy in the EU, is it probable that the process could be limited to a select handful of former Communist states? Applications for admission are multiplying, and there is no obvious boundary at which they can be halted. "Europe Agreements", formally designated as antechambers to entry, have been signed by six coun-

tries – Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria – and four more are pending (Slovenia and the Baltic states). It is only a matter of time before Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Albania and what is left of Bosnia join the queue. Does this mean the British scenario will come to pass? Harold Macmillan once spoke of his hope that the Community, when exposed to the beneficent pressure of a vast free-trade area, would "melt like a lump of sugar in a cup of tea". Such remains the preferred vision of his successors.

There is no doubt that enlargement of the EU to some two dozen states would fundamentally alter its nature. The most immediate effect would be a financial crisis of heroic

proportions. The cost of integrating the Visegrad quartet alone would mean an increase of 60 per cent in the EU budget, rising to nearly 75 per cent by the end of the century. There is no chance of the existing member states accepting such a burden at a time when every domestic pressure is towards tax reduction. That leaves only two other possible ways out: either scrapping support to farming communities and poorer regions (which are composed of voters with the power to resist) or creating a second-class membership for new entrants.

The conviction that EMU and eastern enlargement are incompatible is entirely reasonable. It is shared by the unlikely figure of Jacques Attali, who regards the single currency as a valid but now lost cause, and enlargement as a German project that will lead away from a federal Europe.

Maastricht is unlikely to evaporate so easily. But the hazards of enlargement do not just lie in the economic pitfalls. A still more fundamental difficulty would remain of a purely political nature. To double its membership would cripple the institutions of the EU. Today the five largest states – Germany, France, Italy, Britain and Spain – contain 80 per cent of the population of the EU, but command only just over half the votes in the Council of Ministers. If the 10 ex-Communist applicants were members, the share of these states would fall further, while the proportion of poor countries in the EU entitled to substantial transfers would rise from four out of 15 to 14 out of 25.

This threatens institutional gridlock. The size of the European Parliament would swell towards 800 deputies, the number of commissioners would rise to 40 and a 10-minute introductory speech by each minister at a council would yield a meeting of five hours before business even started.

In such conditions, would not widening inevitably mean loosening? This is the wager in London. Yet the prospect of institutional deadlock might impose as a functional necessity a centralised supranational authority in which majority decisions become normal. Widening could check or reverse deepening. It might also precipitate it. These are the political quicksands on which the Europe to come will be built.

The author is professor of history at the University of California in Los Angeles and the visiting Jean Monnet fellow at the European University in Florence. This is an edited version of a longer article in the current issue of the *London Review of Books*.



Dream on, ye spires

A prize-winning book must surely soon be written about a book prize. Aspiring novelists could do worse than study the fallout over last week's Whitbread Prize. One of the judges was Sir Julian Critchley MP, a



Free and fair: Sir Julian

champion of the biography of Gladstone by Roy Jenkins, chancellor of the University of Oxford. Sir Julian wrote in the *Daily Telegraph*: "We were robbed," adding that the corps of lady novelists on the judging panel plumped for the eventual winner, Kate Atkinson, on the grounds that "we novelists must stick together."

The chairman of the judges, Richard Hoggart, no lady nov-

elist he, revealed that Sir Julian had phoned him to lobby for Lord Jenkins, a fact I gather that he is less than happy about.

In the eventual judging, Roy Jenkins's *Gladstone* received only one vote – Sir Julian's, obviously – while Kate Atkinson's novel *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*, received four votes. Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* received the other two votes.

What intrigues me more is the way I understand Sir Julian argued his case to his fellow judges. My judging-room mole tells me they failed to see the literary relevance when Sir Julian waxed lyrical about Oxford, his alma mater, and told them that a vote for *Gladstone* would make the claret flow in celebration among the dreaming spires. He added that a win for the Oxford chancellor would be a fillip for the university.

Book prize judges of the future be advised. Whatever the merits of the books in question, you know your duty. Lie back and think of Oxford.

Wife in law?

Martin Mears, president of the Law Society, experienced some embarrassment following revelations that he was not married to his partner, yet had

attacked the Family Law Bill for making divorce too easy. He now believes he has found a scapegoat in that age-old punch bag – *Who's Who*.

"I never said that Susan [Greenwood] was my wife," he confided at the monthly meeting of the ruling council of the Law Society last week. "and when *Who's Who* sent an entry form, I left the wife slot blank."

According to Mears, the reference editors wanted more (he'd said he had seven children – can you blame them?), so they looked up newspaper cuts which said that he was married. "I myself," he said proudly "never claimed as much."

The only problem with his thesis is that journalists who interviewed him when he attained the presidency of the Law Society (which is when he entered *Who's Who*) distinctly recall him referring to Ms Greenwood as "my wife". Perhaps it is just a term that lawyers use.

Ugh, blood

There was head-scratching at London's Imperial War Museum when administrative staff realised that a scene worthy of James Bond – stuntmen carrying guns and wearing balacavas were planning to swing down from the balcony and stage a raid on the place for the launch of *Spycraft*, an interactive espionage CD-Rom game. The problem? The Imperial War Museum, home to all kinds of

armoured memorabilia, bizarrely enough, does not want to be seen "glorifying violence".

"They asked us to remove the fake guns, and instruct the stunt men to wear woolly hats instead of balacavas," says a spokeswoman for the game. "In addition, in order not to frighten people we were asked if the assailants could have a struggle with pretend security guards and let the security guards win."

Goodness gracious

A fax, authorised by solicitors, arrives on my desk stating that rock 'n' roll legend Jerry Lee Lewis is "adamantly opposed" to a new musical production about his life – *Whole Lotta Shakin'* – about to open in Coventry before coming to the West End. It states that Mr Lewis will back all efforts to stop the show, written by Todd Ristau, from opening to the public until "an acceptable arrangement can be made".

It appears that the problem stems from writers' rivalry. Charles White, author of *The Killer* (Lewis's official biography) is aggrieved that the Coventry-based Belgrade theatre company was given access to his source material, but that Ristau wrote the play instead of him.

"Mr White has now written his own version, which will be on in the West End soon," his

spokesman now says. One West End play about Jerry Lee Lewis is plausible; the idea of two succeeding sounds, to use the vernacular, like great balls of fire.



Shakin' mad: Jerry Lee

Hymn inside

Producers of BBC's *Songs of Praise* were bemused by a special request from Sir Harry Secombe when he recorded an edition at Wormwood Scrubs prison, to be broadcast next Sunday. Sir Harry said he did not want to do "Bless This House". Could this be anything to do with painful memories from a prison concert Sir Harry gave some years ago, when he included that tune? When he got to the lines: "Bless these walls so firm and stout, keeping want and trouble out," his captive audience burst into hysterical laughter.

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The need for a great debate

A new week, a new initiative on education. Today, Tony Blair will attempt to dispel some of Labour's post-Harmanian gloom by putting forward a couple of ideas of his own for improving standards and choice in schools. Southwark Cathedral will be the venue for unveiling new Labour thinking on getting the best teaching into "sink" schools, and opening up a "fast track" within existing schools for very able children.

Just a few weeks ago, such a speech would have been regarded with routine interest. Blair would have pronounced, teaching unions would have stated their concern at his words, a few column inches would have appeared in the more educationally interested newspapers and that would have been it.

Not any more. What will doubtless pass into history as Labour's week of dis-Harman has changed all that. For the time being, education has come to usurp Europe, the economy and rising violent crime as the lodestone of the nation's feeling of unease and underachievement. The attention that the education system is getting is both welcome and overdue.

But as the weekend's bouts of accusation and rebuttal, punditry and astutising have shown, we are in mortal danger of having the wrong debate about schools. The British people are being invited to make choices between anti-divisive positions on the questions of selection, comprehensiveisation, class sizes and "modern teaching methods", as presented to them by contending dinosaurs.

The irrelevance of some of this discussion is demonstrated by the fact that even the Conservative Party is not suggesting for one minute that the nation reintroduce the old 11-plus system of selecting the academic sheep from the goats. They are allowing some more selection to creep in at the margins, but they understand all too well that nostalgia for a lost era does not constitute a modern education strategy. To take just one recent example, how would selection assist in raising the woeful reading and mathematics standards of our 11-year-olds?

All the main parties, in their calmer moments, have ideas that may assist an improvement in British education. The Government was right to set up Ofsted to inspect schools, right to increase the power of parent governors, right to publish the examination results of schools. Messrs Blunkett and Blair are correct to talk about targeting resources on failing schools, correct to talk about parental responsibility and homework, correct to suggest that schools should be flexible enough to allow very able children to move up. All parties now express a belief in offering a range of types of school for parents to choose between. As general principles, openness and accountability, along with parental involvement and flexibility, will serve very well.

The trouble arises when the debate turns to the motor that will drive our education system. The Conservatives, despite their championing of a limited voucher scheme for nursery schools, have utterly failed (despite being in power for 21 of the past 26 years) to choose between selection by the school and selection by the parent as the key factor. One is forced to the conclusion that they simply do not have sufficient personal interest in state schooling to take the electoral risks of making up their minds.

The Opposition is not doing much better. Fundamentally, the David Blunkett approach (which has the virtue of concentrating on standards in the majority of schools, not just the best ones) is state-driven. It relies wholly on inspectorates, directives and agencies to improve things. The Liberal Democrats' main stated policy, on the other hand, is simply to spend more, without seeming to have any clear idea of where and why.

This is not good enough. Once again, as in the early Forties, we need to come together and debate education with a passionate interest but a dispassionate argument. We know we are in a fix, and that our children and our futures are suffering. It is time to put party and prejudice aside and open a discussion in which the whole nation can take part.

An everyday tale of non-country folk

For 20 years no middle-aged, middle-class discussion has been complete without a "flight to the country" tale. Henry and Dinah tired of the dirt, crime and general aggravation of city-dwelling. They wanted their children to grow up close to fields and cows and other naturey things. For the price of their dingy terrace house, with its postage-stamp garden, they have bought a treasure trove miles outside Stowmarket. Dinah has reckoned the orchard and mastered the Aga, Henry can get to work in the City in just an hour using the M11. The local school seems very good. Oh, and raspberries in Stowmarket are just £1.30 a punnet.

But now, according to today's report by London Residential Research, Henry and Dinah are going back again. The country has palled, urban life exerts its fascination once more. Over the past couple of years, folk have started to flock back to the cities. Why?

For a start, there is absolutely nothing to do. If jam-making and point-to-points do not grip, then time hangs heavy on your hands. Village life itself is a strange combination of nosiness and unfriendliness. The orchard takes a vast amount of work

and produces two rather sour apples and a wasps' nest. Dinah spends hours every day in the car ferrying the kids to school and to their friends. Henry reckons on getting caught up in at least one appalling traffic jam a week. And you can go off raspberries.

Is their return a good thing? Yes, and not just because it stops those Henry and Dinah stories. In the first place, the fewer people there are in the countryside, the better it looks and the more we appreciate it. The exact reverse is true for cities, which are sad, neglected places if too many inhabitants move out. The country ought to be quiet and tedious, the city should be crowded and vibrant.

It is also good because it is more optimistic. The urge to run away and sequester ourselves from our fellows is essentially antisocial. It is little wonder that the worst examples of long-running neighbourhood feuds occur where the people concerned have gone to get away from others. Cities, by their nature, require a tolerance and a willingness to rub along together. That is why the city says welcome back, Henry and Dinah, and the country says good riddance.

We'll drink tae Rabbie, but whae's payin'?

Apparently, the bicentenary of Burns's death has not run smoothly in Scotland - what should have been a great chance to promote a bumper season of Scottish tourism has run into difficulties over lack of money and unclear management. I can't say I'm totally surprised. After all, it is one of the charms of the Scottish character that, though great as individuals, almost anything they attempt as a concerted national effort runs into trouble through lack of management and lack of money. Witness every World Cup football foray, Bonnie Prince Charlie, etc. etc. I sometimes think that Sir Walter Scott can stand as an emblem for the whole nation, with his huge international success followed by his business collapse and gruesome final financial ordeal.

Poor old Robbie Burns followed the same sort of path - an early back-breaking struggle, a short period of literary success and comfort, then poverty, ill health and death at an early age. He was only 37 when he died in 1796 on July 21 - in fact, things were so bad that he reluctantly embraced that most shameful of all professions, an exciseman or, as we would now say, a VAT inspector. Can you imagine, say, Seamus Heaney or Ted Hughes



MILES KINGSTON

sending out your VAT returns? Well, perhaps you can. I don't know the gentlemen personally.

Anyway, as 25 Jan approached, they tried to rescue things a bit in Scotland with the publication of a hitherto unknown and recently rediscovered poem by Robbie Burns. Things are always pretty desperate when this happens. For a start, people generally are unacquainted with the known and well-discovered works of poets, so they are likely to be unimpressed when someone prints out a new, very minor example of the man. For another thing, a suppressed piece of a poet usually has a good reason to be suppressed, and for a third thing, it usually turns out to be fake all along.

For all these reasons, I am somewhat hesitant to bring to the public notice a poem I recently came across in an old notebook which I have

every reason to believe to be a hitherto forgotten piece by Burns. I can't prove it is genuine. What I do claim is that it is hard going, and makes use of disused Scottish words and is therefore highly likely to be a genuine piece of Burns. But I leave it to the judgement of my readers as to what they think of.

Two Hundred Years On

or
Whaur Has All the Money Gane?

When I am dead and live nae more
I trust my fellow Scots will store
Some siller away
To put inside a savings bank
Or hide in yon brae's flowery flank
Against this day.

Aye, when I'm deid and put away,
Two centuries from this day,
Let's hae a party!
With folk that like tae write and think,
But better still, tae tak a drink

- The literati!
Frae all the world the folk will run
Frae Russia and frae Japan
(They love me there!)
To celebrate my life and verse
By getting fou, or even worse,
Fall down the stair!
When midnight sounds, let all folk meet

In the middle of Princes Street
And halt the traffic!
We'll tak a glass in either hand
And dance until we cannae stand.
And then we'll maffick!

(*Dialect word, probably meaning "to lie down on the grass until sobriety returns")

We'll hae sic a muckle bash
As long as we have got the cash
That folks will say
"Do you remember how ye and I
Drank the town of Edinburgh dry?"

"Aye, I mind the day!"
But what is this bad news I hear?
What message fills my heart wi' fear

And total scunner?
The folks that kept the party doosh
Cannot be seen? Oh, jings, oh, loch!

They've done a runner!
Alas! the money's deid and gone!
And now we cannae hae oor fun
Or not a lot.

In this, my anniversary year,
I think the message's unco clear:
Don't trust a Scot.
My bicentenary's run aground!
We cannae even buy a round

Of low-strength beers.
Let's hope they make a better go
Of getting the alcohol tax flow
In three hundred years!

What teenagers know about sex

From Mrs Suzanne Wilson
Sir: Does Peter Luff (letter, 26 January) really think that if 12- and 13-year-old girls are given no advice on sexual matters by an accurate source, they will not obtain it from somewhere else?

When I was in my teens, in the Seventies, I picked up all kinds of information about sex from school friends (naturally not the most reliable source), women's magazines, novels and parents. However, none of this information made my friends or I want to become sexually active immediately. In fact, it probably prevented us from making stupid mistakes.

The Dutch, and other similarly open-minded Europeans, have probably got it right and have fewer teenage pregnancies as a result. Keeping young people in the dark means they will probably end up making mistakes they will later regret.
Yours faithfully,
SUZANNE WILSON
London, E9
26 January

From Mr J. A. Gay
Sir: Commenting on Sarah Cooke (aged 13), my granddaughter (aged 14) said Sarah would know nothing about Muslims, because you don't do that until the third year.
Yours faithfully,
JOHN GAY
Kirtling, Cambridgeshire

Geocentric views in ancient Greece

From Mr Julian B. Barbour
Sir: W K Harper (letter, 27 January) is perpetuating an injustice by trying to prove the existence of a "golden heliocentric age" of Greek astronomy before Ptolemy put the clock back for 13 centuries. Mr Harper claims that Aristarchus asserted that the Sun is the centre of the solar system and that the planets revolve around it. He may have, but all the extant accounts of what he said merely mention the Earth. There is no word about the planets and not a shred of evidence that Aristarchus had Copernicus's great insight that mobility of the Earth can explain - at a stroke - all the retrogression loops of the planets.

The first really "professional" Greek astronomer (ie, someone who attempted to set up proper theories of the motions of the celestial bodies and test them by observations) was Hipparchus. His only great successor in antiquity - 300 years later - was Ptolemy. Both were geocentrists, but the outstanding lasting value of their work is quite independent of the geocentric-heliocentric issue.

It is not Ptolemy's fault that a few paranoid clerics and an especially vain pope at the height of the counter-reformation took a dislike to Galileo and tried to rescue the old Ptolemaic world view. Criticising Ptolemy for geocentricity is like blaming Newton for not having anticipated Einstein's relativity.
Yours etc,
JULIAN B. BARBOUR
Banbury, Oxfordshire
27 January

Holy smoke

From Mr George Healy
Sir: If Peter O'Toole's idea of Heaven is moving from one smoke-filled room to another (Quote Unquote, 20 January), he can go to Hell.
Yours faithfully,
GEORGE HEALY
London, N1
22 January

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The comprehensive education of Bernie Grant

From Mr Patrick Worms

Sir: Bernie Grant's stance on selective education is a noble one ("Comprehensive education failed my sons, says Bernie Grant", 25 January). It takes grit for a politician to admit he was wrong and to publicly regret the consequences of his actions, even when doing so contravenes the official policy of his party.

Mr Grant knows from bitter experience how comprehensive education fails Britain's children. He will be applauded by any who regularly have to deal with his failures. Much more than Mr Prescott or Mr Hattersley, he knows what Labour voters actually want: an education system that stretches their children and gives them the tools they will need to prosper as adults. Most voters will happily accept selective schooling as the price to pay to reach this goal.

For the Labour party to cling to the failed concept of comprehensive schooling is serious enough to cost it the next election. I know that I, as a parent, will be unable to vote for a party that would consign my two young children to the intellectual dustbins our schools have become.
Yours sincerely,
PATRICK WORMS
Brussels

From Mr C. J. Davies

Sir: Bernie Grant's attack on London's comprehensive schools is simplistic, as is his belief that sending his children to a private school would cure all ills.

As a parent living in Haringey, I have seen my son attend state schools, with a brief and unsuccessful flirtation with a private school for two years, up to the present, where he is in the final A-level year. In spite of constant cut-backs, his schools seem to have succeeded very well indeed.

I say "seem to" because I recognise that education is a very complex matter, and no single factor is responsible for success, and success is not easy to define. Does Mr Grant take any responsibility in this process, or does he expect it all to be done by the school? Do his children want, or work for, the same success as he would like. Bringing up children is a bit of a mess, and down-right certainty in the matter smacks of arrogance.
Yours faithfully,
C. J. DAVIES
London, N6
27 January

From Mr Anthony Potts
Sir: Bernie Grant is absolutely right in his common sense approach to the education

Whitbread: the judges' choice

From Mr Simon Tait

Sir: The sniping at the Whitbread Book of the Year judges over the past few days is more than a little irritating. Commentators from AN Wilson to Andrew Neil seem undecided as to whether we were philistines, who had failed to understand the importance of Salman Rushdie to our literary culture as against an unheard of woman who had never written a novel before, or literati, who for some spiteful reason had conspired to deny Rushdie his right.

I for one, am not ashamed to say that I voted for Kate Atkinson's *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*. That the Atkinson book was the best of the five was an opinion I went into the judging with; I was open to persuasion, and I was not moved to change my mind.

I do not know how the other judges voted, it was a secret ballot; but as a matter of record, there were seven votes cast and two abstentions, including that of the chairman, Richard Hoggart. Of the seven, four were for *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* two were for Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* and one was for Roy Jenkins's *Gladstone*.

At the outset of the conclave, Professor Hoggart reminded us that we were voting for books, not authors, but I think we were already clear about that. Our task was to pick the best contribution to the literature of 1995. My conclusion was that Rushdie is a significant writer who had not, this time, written a great novel, and that Atkinson had produced an ingenious and accessible piece of work which was the better book.
Yours faithfully,
SIMON TAIT
London, SE22
27 January

Launching the millennium

From Dr D. A. Rothery

Sir: Nothing that I have seen proposed for the millennium inspires me. There are more worthy things than temples, opera houses and parties. Despite our heritage of great navigators, we British have played little part in the exploration of the solar system. There is only one main planet that has not yet been visited by a reconnaissance space probe, and this is Pluto.

Nasa has a Pluto probe in the design stage, which could be ready for launch in the year 2000, but lacks the financial resources to proceed. If the Millennium Commission were to stump up £100m, Britain could buy a controlling share in it.

If we were heavily involved in this enterprise it could provide a stimulus for educational initiatives, as well as a boost for British

science, throughout the 10-year mission. Moreover, the first space probe to Pluto will be remembered for a thousand years, and that surely is the point of the whole thing.
Yours faithfully,
DAVID A. ROTHERY
Department of Earth Sciences
The Open University
Milton Keynes
26 January

From Mr Ed Jackman
Sir: It has been stated that there are over 1,000 mosques in the UK. However, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the home of Islam, there is not a single church, yet plenty of Christians.
Would not the Prince of Wales better serve the spirit of the millennium by using his influence - from one royal house to another - to redress this imbalance?
Yours,
ED JACKMAN
Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex
25 January

Hard choices at 11

From Dr Mark W. Kermode

Sir: I was dismayed to read in today's leader your recommendation for schools to "focus on music, the arts, science or sport". In 1994, my son took A-levels in chemistry, physics, maths, general studies and music. Now studying chemistry at university, he is still actively involved in music. To have made a decision between a career in chemistry or one in music at the age of 11 is absurd.
Yours faithfully,
MARK W. KERMODE
Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics
University of Liverpool
Liverpool
24 January

From Mr Roland Anderson
Sir: Nobody has yet come up with a convincing reason why children should be tested. How does testing help to raise academic standards? And why do we have this fetish about academic standards at the incredibly young age of 11? Our 11-year-olds at Summerhill have always spent their time as they pleased, and their lives haven't been wrecked.
Yours faithfully,
ROLAND ANDERSON
Head of Humanities
Summerhill School
Leiston, Suffolk

From Mr P. J. Castle
Sir: Just this week, clients of ours have received pay slips from the Inland Revenue for interest on tax paid slightly late for amounts of 8p, 12p and £1.75.

Regardless of whether such amounts are ever settled, the cost of processing and transmitting all the necessary paperwork can hardly be justified. It will be interesting to see if legal action follows for recovery if these demands are not met.
Yours faithfully,
PETER CASTLE
Gillingham, Kent
26 January

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PETER CASTLE
Gillingham, Kent
26 January

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Crossing the cultural divide to the South Bank

The Festival Hall's new writer in residence muses on his first week - after quitting the streets for a temple of high art

I have lived in London most of my life, but until a few weeks ago I had never been in the Royal Festival Hall. I think I might have walked through it a couple of times, but that would have been a matter of minutes. Every time I say this to someone in the building they seem surprised, but the fact is that I have never had a compelling reason to visit the place. After all, I have never attended a live orchestral concert, or seen an opera on stage, and I have managed to avoid being present at even a single performance of poetry, dance or mime, which just about covers most of what the Festival Hall does. In effect, it is foreign territory to me.

I come from that other culture, the one where people grew up watching television and Hollywood films, listening to the pop charts and following the sports results at the weekend. The nearest I got to the Festival Hall in those days was when my fifth-year class at school trooped down to an amateur performance of *Macbeth* in south London, and spent the entire time rolling Coke bottles down the central aisle to annoy our

English teacher. The social divide between the two kinds of cultural experience is probably sharper and more meaningful in Britain than anywhere else in Europe. Throw race into the equation and the gap yawns even wider.

So I am experiencing a sense of mild trauma at finding myself Writer in Residence at one of the temples of High Culture, with an office round behind the Poetry Library and an imposing view over the river.

I am not sure what I was expecting, but my first few days at the Festival Hall have been full of surprises. The grand scale of the public areas sets up inflated expectations, and my first surprise is how small and crowded the office accommodation is. My desk is situated behind a partition in a sort of corridor running along the outside of the building, which I am told used to be a balcony until they put a wall round it. I am relatively fortunate, though, to have a desk all to myself. On the floor below is the literature department, which is a desk in the corner of a large office. The education department sits at a desk opposite.

There are half a dozen other desks in the room representing various projects, and there must be a dozen people here, working in what seems an impossibly small space. By comparison with the huge vista of the concourse downstairs, the permanent staff seem to be squeezed together in whatever space is left.

This first week is bewildering. It is the largest arts centre in Europe and they put on hundreds of events every year - music, theatre, recitals, literary debates, festivals, you name it. But most of the staff who work on arranging the arts programmes seem to be employed part-time, two-and-a-half or three days a week. On the other hand, my suspicion is that they are putting in the kind of hours that you would in a normal five-day week.

It seems normal for everyone to be around for most of the day and the evening. They have all got their heads down, too. Maybe it is because they are mostly women. The proportion of men in this part of the building is minuscule - which I guess accounts for the atmosphere. I have never worked in a large organisation



MIKE PHILLIPS

'What do you do?' everyone asks me. I evade the question

like this, but after a couple of days I am beginning to feel puzzled.

Everyone is amiable. They smile a lot. They do not shout or even raise their voices. They are friendly, democratic, apparently nice to each other, considerate and team-oriented. After a few days of all this niceness, I am going crazy. Fortunately, a problem turns up halfway through the week when one of the speakers for a weekend event cries off.

A pall of gloom descends over my colleagues. The problem is that the event is sold out, so a number of people will be turning up expecting to hear that particular speaker. Postponing is difficult, because with a full diary it is hard to find another date at short notice. Substituting a similar speaker is difficult, for obvious reasons. Simply cancelling is the worst option, because paying back the money would have an adverse effect on a finely tuned balance sheet. The agony lasts most of the afternoon while the literature department chases a number of rapidly disappearing options.

All this is within a context of difficult funding. There is the obligation for everything to make a profit or break even. That same day, the Arts Council announces that it is freezing increases in its grants for another year. The only bright spot is the building's collective pleasure at not being the subject of a fly-on-the-wall TV documentary. Wednesday morning buzzes with talk about the previous night's episode of *The House*. According to rumour, the Festival Hall was approached and

turned down the opportunity. "The problem is," someone whispers to me, "there's no guarantee we'd have come out looking any better."

"What do you do?" everyone asks me when I tell them I am the resident writer. I find myself evading the question. My brief is to support the practice of creative writing throughout the nation. A modest proposal. In my first days I am trying to work out what that means in practice, talking to creative writing groups from colleges, schools and arts centres who call in and ask me to look at their work and talk about the practice of writing. I begin to think about ways to take literature away from its critical grounding and back to narrative and what makes people actually want to carry on reading. I begin to sketch in my mind various kinds of activity round the themes of story-telling. Antonia, the head of literature, arranges for me to participate in a course for choreographers. I try not to think about it.

By Saturday I am half-expecting that few people would have struggled through the snow. But the literature department is there in force

and a full house hears Christopher Fraying deliver a sharp, witty lecture on the correspondences between horror movies and the literature from which they are drawn.

In the middle of this recital, a group of young men walks into the lobby wearing cardboard cheeses on their heads. They are led by a youth dressed as Captain Hook in maroon velvet and lace. They turn out to be Brentford fans whose football match has been cancelled and who had been turned out of every other public building. They stand at the bar giving an impromptu performance. I have a sneaking suspicion that this must be a satire on performance art.

I end my first week moaning about the social isolation of literary circles in this country, and dishing out a lecture to Antonia about the need for writers to get involved in the great public issues of our society, race, nationality, identity, crime. "The programme needs out of this building," I tell her. She nods understandingly. On the way home I feel guilty. I want to change things.

But, dammit, I am in love with the place already.

Talk of higher standards is empty while Labour is gripped by anti-selection ideology, says Stephen Pollard

Can Blair answer the Tory jibe?

Later today Tony Blair will attempt to rescue his party from the quagmire into which Labour has fallen over the past few days by arguing that the real issue is not selection in 160 schools, it is standards for 7 million children in 250,000 schools. It is perhaps ironic that he will say this in Southwark Cathedral, for it is the deplorable standard of Southwark schools that precipitated Labour's recent education crisis.

Blair will propose a "fast track" for bright children by suggesting that "accelerated learning" (where younger children are taught with older children if they are bright enough - a commonplace in the private sector) should be introduced into the state system. He will then promise that a Labour government would bring the best teachers into failing inner city "sink" schools.

The question is: are these just warm words, or have the events of the past week alerted Labour to the need to tighten up its education policy in the face of Conservative attacks and the inconsistencies in Labour's existing policy?

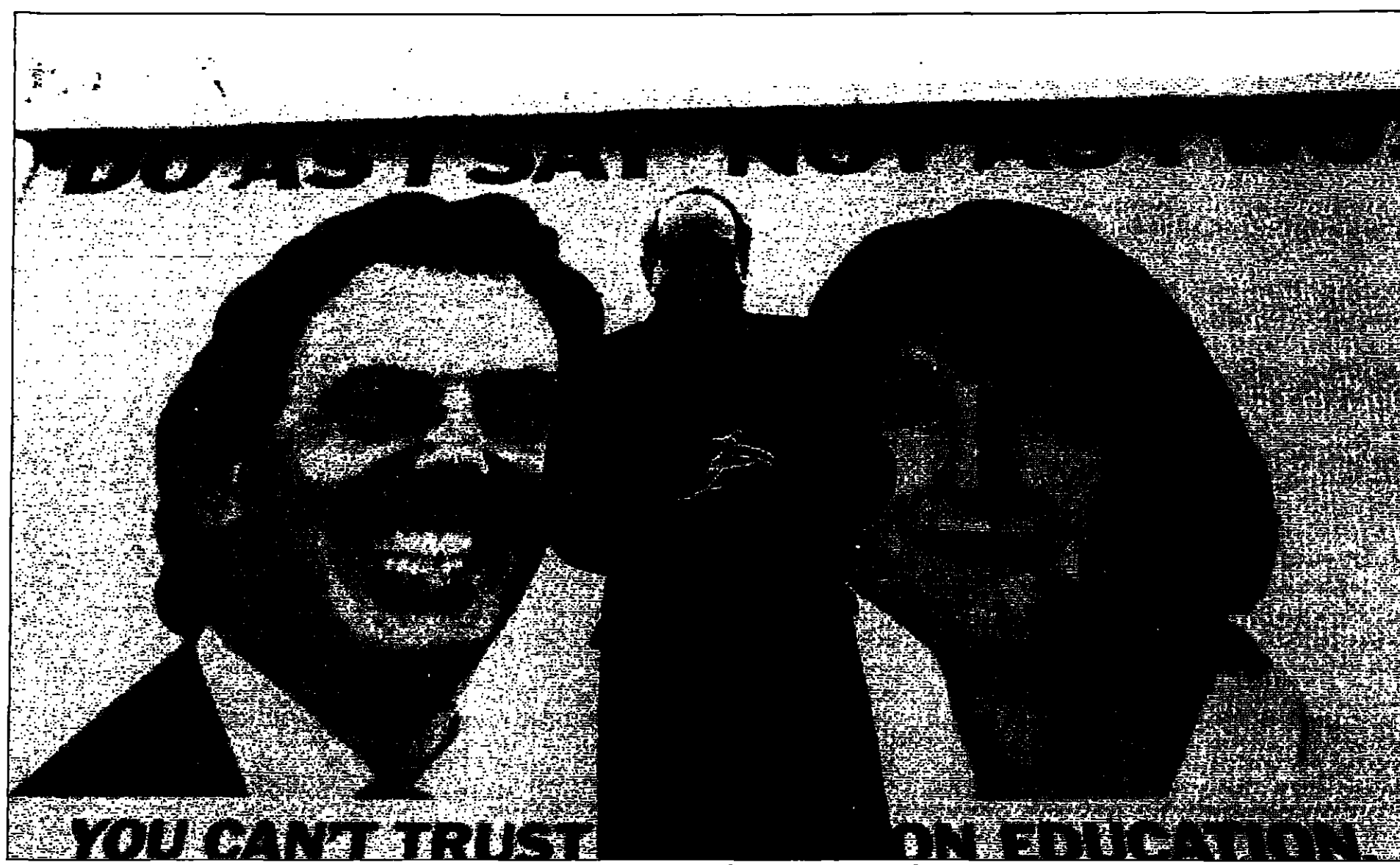
A week on, it is now clear that there are certain shared beliefs across the spectrum. Everyone claims to want to give all children a decent education. Everyone claims to want to increase standards. Everyone claims to have the solution to the problem of "sink" schools. Everyone claims to be against "social selection". Within the Labour Party, everyone claims to be in favour of comprehensive schools.

But how do we get from here to there? How do we ensure that everyone does indeed attend a school where - whatever its locality or its particular specialisation or style - high standards prevail.

When it comes to dealing with these issues, new Labour is faced with an almost insurmountable hurdle. The party is comprised overwhelmingly of ordinary members who believe that education is primarily about social engineering (in Tony Crosland's words, that education should be seen "as a serious alternative to nationalisation in promoting a more just and efficient society"), or still worse, of members of the very educational establishment that has failed the country and its schools in recent decades.

So even for new Labour, which was able to overturn the old Clause IV and which has rebuilt the party's philosophy into one in tune with the modern world, there is still one no-go area: education.

Although all the evidence shows that a comprehensive system simply does not educate children of all abilities as effectively as a system of selective, specialist schools, the party is unable to turn the corner. Instead, new Labour has to come up with a series of "initiatives" which, like motherhood and apple pie, are good in themselves (who could be against high standards, for goodness sake?) but which do not address the fundamental problem: the system itself is incapable of delivering what we require. As the new report



Rubbing it in: the Conservative Party chairman, Brian Mawhinney, and his party's poster exploiting Labour's discomfiture over the Harman affair

Photograph: PA

by Chris Woodhead, Chief Inspector of Schools, will show later this week, more than a quarter of the secondary schools classified as "outstandingly successful" are grammar schools - even though they account for only 0.7 per cent of schools in England and Wales.

The hope is that our schools are so bad - the latest report from the World Business Forum ranks British secondary educational machinery as 35th

The only workable way forward is a system of properly thought through selection. At the moment we have an insidious form of selection - which catchment area or private school your parents can afford. Parents with the opportunity to exercise this choice do so because they know their children will better prosper for it. Surely the purpose of a party that believes in opportunity for all should argue that it is not just a tiny élite which should be

on the academic 20 per cent - and the rest could go hang.

That view has changed. We now recognise that children have different skills, all of which need nurturing. And the best way of nurturing a skill is in a focused, specialised, school. The largest ever survey of effective schooling, the 60,000-pupil report conducted for the Brookings' Institute in Washington, shows that pupils in all academic ranges, and with all kinds of skills, outper-

Holland, Germany, France, Austria - is surely good enough for Britain. Or do we as a nation not have the wit to assemble a system of specialist schools that offer a multiplicity of provision?

But as of now, the fact that the evidence, and common sense, points so clearly in one direction is almost irrelevant. For so great is the grip of the ideologues that the prospects for change are, at best, medium term. The hard fact is that new Labour will only be creating a rod for its own back if it thinks it can simply wish up standards. New Labour will have to come to terms with the idea that selection - or specialisation, if the euphemism suits better - is the only system capable of ridding our country of "sink" schools. It will have to confront and jettison the culture of excuses that characterises British state education today. Only then will the party be able to make good its promises.

The writer is research director of the Fabian Society but will shortly become head of research at the Social Market Foundation. His paper, *Schools, Selection and the Left*, is available, price £8, from the SMF, 20 Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW7.

New Labour will wage war on low standards and failure. 'Tough on failure, tough on the causes of failure' is the party's mantra. Yes - but how?

out of 48 - that Labour will be able to cover up the holes in its policy by lambasting the Government that has presided over this, while delivering the soundbites that play well in the present, but which say nothing about the mechanics by which Labour will deliver. "New Labour will wage war on low standards and failure, and is the party of educational achievement for all. Tough on failure, tough on the causes of failure" is the mantra. Yes - but how?

able to send their children to the type of school they wish but all parents?

The argument has never been about whether selection worked for the selected. That is a given. The argument has, rather, been about the spectre of the secondary moderns. But the success of grammar schools did not cause the failure of secondary moderns. They failed because British culture at the time only valued academic education, so all energies were concentrated

form their peers if they are taught in such schools.

The only argument ever made against those who advocate selective schooling is that "we don't want to return to a system where 80 per cent of pupils are regarded as failures". But that is a non sequitur. No one is suggesting a return to the old system. What the advocates of selection say is that a system which is good enough for all the countries the British left worships - Sweden, Denmark,

need more support from teachers. As a result, in schools with large numbers of children from homeless families the extra demands can adversely affect the progress of all pupils, not just those living in temporary accommodation.

The Bill's proposals will make all this worse. Homeless families will face the prospect of one temporary home after another. The cost to the Treasury of these temporary homes will be an extra £118m in housing benefit in the first year alone.

All those who care about stable family life and the sensible use of public resources must reject these proposals.

The writer is director of Shelter

Turning away the homeless

ANOTHER VIEW

Chris Holmes

rary accommodation because their families have become homeless. A report last year by researchers at the Institute of Education shows how their education suffers from this lack of stability.

Families living in temporary accommodation often face frequent moves - sometimes as many as two or three in the same year. Where a

sive and overcrowded bed and breakfast accommodation, when it would be far better - and cheaper - to build permanent homes.

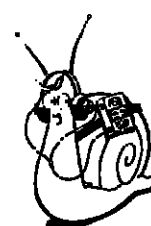
The experience of homelessness reaches into every aspect of life. It is more difficult for homeless people to get a job. The stress of homelessness can lead to mental or physical ill-health. Many homeless people are not on the electoral register and do not even have a vote.

But one of the areas where homelessness takes its greatest toll is in the impact it has on children. More than 50,000 children are living in tempo-

Today the House of Commons will be asked to give a second reading to the Government's Housing Bill, which will affect homeless families all over the country. Under the Bill, homeless families will no longer be given priority in the allocation of permanent homes.

In future, local councils may only be required to provide temporary accommodation for 12 months. More homeless families will be turned away by local councils and forced to take an insecure, expensive tenancy from a private landlord - the rent for which will come from the public purse.

Homelessness exacts a terrible cost in wasted money and damaged lives. Families are trapped in temp-



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obituaries/gazette

Harold Brodkey

The ambition endemic in American writers cripples talent as much as nurtures it. Harold Brodkey was a gifted writer who became virtually a caricature of the American rite of celebrity.

Although what he wrote was consistently autobiographical, his work did not suffer from a public confusion of his writing with his personality – as with Norman Mailer. Neither, as a very social member of New York's literary scene, did he opt for a reclusive life which, as in the case of Thomas Pynchon, paradoxically focuses public attention all the more on the writer himself. Instead, Brodkey became famous for what he had not written, and celebrated internationally for the novel that was to come.

Even without benefit of this most perverse kind of fame, Brodkey's life was unusual, his talent remarkable. He was born in the Midwest in 1930, and raised there by his mother after she died when he was two. The shock of this loss resulted in a two-year silence as he later suggested, to develop an almost obsessive ability to take things in quickly: "I learnt to read in about 30 seconds... I was so abnormally bright as a child there was no limit to social acceptability."

The precocity was lifelong, but so too was the sense of loss fostered by his mother's death, and by the death of both his adopted parents in his teens. From the Midwest Brodkey went to Harvard, then in the early 1950s moved to New York and married for the first time. He soon began to place stories in the *New Yorker*, and a first collection, well received, appeared in 1958.

On the surface this all augured well; comparisons could be aptly drawn between the Brodkey of the late 1950s and John Updike, also a Harvard graduate and precocious contributor to the *New Yorker*. Yet, where Updike's career took a steady upward path of accomplishment (*Rabbit, Run* was to appear in 1960), Brodkey's stalled. He continued to write stories, some of which appeared in a collection about 30 years later, but he also contracted in 1964 to write a novel. Not even Sisyphus on his very first push uphill could have been so unaware of the true burden being assumed.

The Runaway Soul, Brodkey's novel, appeared in 1991, but it was during the quarter-century of its intermittent composition that Brodkey became truly famous. His collection *Stories in an Almost Classical Mode* appeared in 1988, many of them very good indeed. "Innocence", an account of a sexually voracious affair with a beautiful young woman ("To see her in sunlight was to see Marxism die"), stands out for its candour, and the title story, about the death of his adopted mother, is made the more moving by the dispassion of the narrator's account. But it was the novel which literary society was waiting for; nothing else would do.

It may seem hard to understand why. True, Brodkey was already recognised as a talented writer of stories whose natural next move, in conventional American literary terms, would be the "big book" or novel. Also, as a *New Yorker* contributor living in the city, socially (and sexually) active, a powerful personality who was tall and attractive to boot, Brodkey was the natural object of the gossip and talk that make up much of a putative literary reputation. But neither explanation fully accounts for the fame this non-performance gave into. It was, in the final analysis, as if America wanted a non-existent masterpiece, and one created by a writer (unlike J.D. Salinger) willing to talk about it.

Inevitably, when *The Runaway Soul* appeared, there was an almost universal sense of let-down. Little of it had much to do with the merits of the book, for encumbered with such expectations the authors of the Gospels themselves would have suffered at the hands of reviewers. Only Salman Rushdie stood out prominently as a Brodkey defender, pointing out the many riches of the author's prose, accepting its many longwinded (*The Runaway Soul* is over 800 pages long), while defending its "huge carnival of language".

Certainly the strength and themes of Brodkey's stories recur in the longer work. The dissection of sexual development and the emergence of bisexuality shock less than they would have at the time of the book's commissioning, but may be more interesting for that. The details of ordinary Midwestern life are incessantly conveyed, as if the

miniaturist preoccupations of Nicholson Baker have been put in larger hands. The Proustian conviction that linear narratives are inauthentic tools for capturing life makes for confusing juxtapositions, but sometimes powerful ones. The weakest element in the novel is the unevenness of its prose. When straightforward and descriptive it is effective:

Then you come to another sunny district – puritanical little gardens, garden beds, dry-looking rural lawns, clean ditches alongside the road, and fewer trees, and these are topped or pruned or solitary in wide spaces. Nothing is hidden. A single tractor moves at the far end of a dipping and swelling field. A meek boy sits in a kitchen chair with a doll and next him a sad woman is peeling potatoes over a wash tub.

When abstract and self-consciously intelligent it is ponderous, pretentious:

It is somehow part of the substance, the very quality of my mind, to conceive of goodness as absolute, unchanging, as solid and philosophical, and of evil as cloudy, unstable, changeable, capable of redemption, worldly, temporal. But that is the mind's doing. That conception hardly matches actuality or my own thought but is a shadowy thing, an absolutist notion of the matter... traditional... since goodness is temporal, too, is as cloudy, interpretable, changeable, as ridden by sloppiness.

The hostile reaction to his novel was devastating to Brodkey; in bleaker moments he suggested it may have brought on the full-blown AIDS he died from. Curiously, however, it also seems to have liberated him as a writer, and another novel, *Profane Friendship*, was published in 1994. Again, it did not enjoy good reviews but was sufficiently distinctive to suggest a considerable talent at work. As his illness took hold, Brodkey continued to write, including two powerful essays on his own AIDS for the *New Yorker*. These are notable less for their revelations about his homosexual past than for the mix of personal preoccupation and detachment while facing death: "It's my turn to die," he wrote. "I can see that that is interesting to some people, but not that it is tragic."

The self-absorption found in all Brodkey's work is present, but the self-absorption is now moderated. At last, Brodkey's reputation – whatever its fortunes to come – will be for what he wrote, not for what he failed to.

Andrew Rosenheim



Brodkey: 'I suppose I'm what's called a near-great writer'

Photograph: Nicholas Turpin

I first met Harold Brodkey in 1991 when, in company with his wife Ellen Schwamm, he came to London to promote *The Runaway Soul*, writes Gilbert Adair. As one of the very few British critics to have praised the novel – as, apparently, one of the very few critics to have read it from its first page to its last – I was rung up by *The Late Show*, which was (rather desperately, was my impression) looking for someone to interview him. I accepted, hastened along to meet him at Television Centre and almost instantly fell under his spell.

I say almost, for Brodkey's charm was of the so-called "disarming" kind which normally has one reaching for one's revolver. How can he – I wondered suspiciously – be so ingratiating to a total stranger and really mean it? Surely it has to be a pose? Yet it soon became evident that Harold Brodkey charmed as he breathed; and on our subsequent encounters in New York he passed every traditional test of sincerity and af-

fection. If I were delayed returning to my hotel for an appointment with him, I would find him sitting patiently in the lobby. If I left a message on his answering machine, the call would infallibly be returned. If we had a dinner date, he would be in the restaurant before me. He was, to be sure, an incurable narcissist – but, considering his behavioural elegance and conversational brilliance, who could blame him?

The last time I saw him he was already dying. I rode up in the elevator of his West 88th Street apartment block bracing myself for the shock that I expected to receive from his physical deterioration. I ought to have known better: apart from a few extra grey circles around his eyes, he looked terrific. It was typical of Brodkey that, at that stage of his condition at least, he contrived to be terminally ill in the photographic way that movie characters are.

Although he had clearly been pained by *The Runaway Soul's* less than unanimous critical

reception, he had never lost faith in its enduring qualities. Nor had I. In our conversation that afternoon I told him I thought his novel such a giant, baggy monster of genius, it had had the effect of obscuring its own context, thereby frustrating those reviewers who can only function by "contextualising" works of literature. "Yes," he sighed, "I suppose I'm what's called a near-great writer." In that "near", in that exquisitely lucid qualification of his own vanity, there was all of Harold Brodkey.

Aaron Roy Weintraub (Harold Roy Brodkey), writer: born Stanton, Illinois 25 October 1930; author of *First Love and Other Sorrows* 1958 (revised edition 1986), *Women and Angels* 1985, *Stories in an Almost Classical Mode* 1988, *The Runaway Soul* 1991, *Profane Friendship* 1994; married 1952 Joanna Brown (one daughter; marriage dissolved 1962), 1980 Ellen Schwamm; died New York 26 January 1996.

Olga Havlová

"One of life's unshakable certainties is Olga. We've known one another for 33 years and for 30 years we've lived together through the possible and the impossible," wrote Václav Havel. Havel's 143 letters to Olga from prison (published in English as *Letters to Olga* in 1988) give a moving insight into the depth of mutual support they offered one another during the grey and soul-destroying period of "normalisation" in the face of almost constant persecution by the authorities.

Olga Havlová never lived in the shadow of her husband. During their dissident life in the Eighties, she was one of the founder members of the samizdat *Original Video Journal*, which tried to capture the reality of life in Czechoslovakia on film to show to the outside world. When Havel became President after the Velvet Revolution, she shrugged off the role of "First Lady", taking it for granted that she should continue to do her own work in her own right. Rallying the support of other former dissidents, she set up the "Good Will Foundation" in 1990 to support the mentally and physically disabled, working from her philosophy of a civic society built on mutual trust.

But at the same time she remained a private person, astoundingly untouched by her position in the public realm and always allowing herself time to reflect and gather strength. "I sometimes feel guilty about keeping space for myself at whatever cost," she said in 1993.

Olga Havlová had a tough preparation for life. In the days of her childhood in the working-class Prague suburb of Zizkov, she learnt to survive. Her parents divorced when she was six, and from an early age she knew both the unlimited freedom of the city and the responsibility of family, helping to bring up her elder sister's five children. She served an apprenticeship as a stocking-mender for the Bata shoe company, and went on to work

in accounts after suffering an injury on a cutting machine.

It was through a friend that she met her husband in the famous Café Slavia in Prague, and from the start the couple found they had much in common, in particular a love for the theatre. When Havel was working as a scene-shifter and later dramatist at the Theatre on the Balustrade, Olga found work in the same theatre, and Havel often consulted her in his work. "Sometimes Václav wakes me in the night and reads me a scene he's just written. We've always done everything together."

In the five years of her work in the Good Will Foundation, Havlová raised the equivalent of £15m for causes varying from projects to break down the isolation of the mentally dis-

abled from society, to summer camps for asthmatic children from the polluted cities of northern Bohemia. Her approach to the foundation reflected her approach to life in general.

"You should never give up just because some bureaucrat says that there is no money," she said of her work last autumn. "You should ask, why is there no money? – and then keep 'petering' until there is."

David Vaughan

Olga Splichalová, political activist and charities campaigner: born Prague 11 July 1933; married 1964 Václav Havel; died Prague 27 January 1996.

Dev Kanta Borooah, politician, died 28 January, aged 82. President of India's governing Congress party, 1973-77. Coined the slogan "India is Indira and Indira is India" in 1975, when Indira Gandhi as prime minister imposed two years of national emergency.

David Greville, eighth Earl of Warwick, died 28 January, aged 61. In 1978 sold Warwick Castle to Madame Tussauds for £5m. Sander Haros, middle distance runner, died Budapest 24 January, aged 65. Set 11 world records in 1955-56.

Commander Hugh Hodgkinson

Hugh Hodgkinson became a public-school headmaster after he had already completed one career with distinction.

He was born in 1912 and educated at the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth. He was then sent to South Africa, where he served as ADC to the Governor-General and found time to visit Table Mountain where he proposed to his wife – Wendy – and started a partnership which was an outstanding success to the day he died. His war service, which he was usually too modest to recall, included a period commanding HMS *Petrel*; his courage and leadership while in command and confronting enemy E-boats earned him a DSC.

He was appointed Headmaster of Milton Abbey school in 1955, six years after leaving the Navy and at an age when many would have been happy to retire to the nearest bar and spend the rest of their lives recounting their exploits. He took up his post when the school was just a year old.

Milton Abbey, near Blandford in Dorset, was a large



Hodgkinson: courageous

country house designed by Sir William Chambers, built in 1771-76 for the first Lord Milton and latterly owned by the Hambro family. It had been a faith-healing centre and had then lain empty when Dr C.K. Francis-Brown acquired it to found the school. At the time of Hodgkinson's appointment there were 50 boys and a bank balance which even the most optimistic politician would have found hard to justify. Confidence was in short supply.

When his predecessor walked out without introducing him to the staff or providing any other information, Hodgkinson called the boys and staff together and expressed his own confidence in the school's future. When he announced that the uniform would change from grey suits to green shorts and every day would start with a mile run and a cold shower he encountered almost as much flak as he must have seen in Dunkirk, where he was Senior Officer of a flotilla of destroyers, and when covering the Normandy landings. His efforts there earned him a bar to his DSC for "gallantry, skill, determination and devotion to duty" and they were qualities which never deserted him.

As a headmaster he knew he faced a challenge but he persisted even when in 1956 a fire destroyed a fifth of the school buildings two days before term began. Gradually his efforts were rewarded and a place which then no one wanted to know has become one of the most sought-after schools of the 1990s, catering for 250 pupils.

The most important lessons Hughie Hodgkinson taught were not academic. He encouraged thousands of boys to discover abilities they never knew they had and gave them the self-confidence to persevere and get things right. He also urged everyone to respect the views held by others – all qualities which are helpful in life, as Hodgkinson knew from his own experiences.

At a time when minions hiding behind a cloak of political correctness are giving education a bad name, it is refreshing to recall the achievements of a man of foresight and courage who always led from the front and who set an example which others were proud to try to follow.

John Burder

Robert Hugh Hodgkinson, naval officer and schoolmaster: born Torporley, Cheshire 13 January 1912; DSC and bar 1944; Headmaster, Milton Abbey 1955-69; married 1938 Wendy Ward-Jackson (two sons, one daughter); died Horton, Dorset 22 January 1996.

The Rev Donald Harris

When Donald Harris resigned as Archdeacon of Bedford in 1955 and accepted the prestigious London parish of St Paul's, Knightsbridge, it was automatically assumed he had entered the second stage of his grooming for the episcopate. A string of previous incumbents had become bishops, and Father Harris seemed eminently cut out to do the purple. But it was said that when offered a colonial bishopric he replied "No thanks" on the back of a postcard, and in the event he remained at St Paul's for 23 exotic years, training able curates and ministering to a coterie of wealthy parishioners, some of whom he referred to as the "Trout Trout for tea" in his diary meant some dowager was due to descend.

Harris was born in 1904, three and a half months ahead of the future Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, with whom he shared a school education at King's College Choir School in Cambridge. From there Harris went to Haileybury, where he somewhat surprisingly distinguished

himself on the rugby pitch as a swift and pugnacious outside three-quarter. He returned to Cambridge, graduating in 1925, and after two years at Cuddesdon Theological College he was ordained deacon in 1927, serving his title at Chesterfield Parish Church.

It was at King's College, Cambridge, that Donald Harris, like so many clergy of his generation, fell under the spell of the dean, Eric Milner-White, later Dean of York, to whose influence Harris owed his alle-



Harris: 'Trout for tea'

giance to that sane and elegant brand of Anglo-Catholicism that became a hallmark of his ministry. And having been a chorister at King's for four years and, from 1923 to 1926, a choral scholar, he quite naturally brought to the churches he served, in particular St Paul's, a knowledge and love of music that he used to great advantage to enrich the liturgy.

For all his apparent flamboyance, and deceptively languid appearance, Donald Harris was a deeply pastoral priest, much in demand as a confessor, in particular to the clergy. From 1968 to 1971 he was president of the Association for Promoting Retreats. And he was never one for flitting from pillar to post. He gave nine years to Great Greenford as rector, and a decade to St Mary's, Bedford, when for nine years he also served as Archdeacon of Bedford, before settling down to an unfashionably long haul at St Paul's. Here his preaching skills in Holy Week attracted regular visitors from Princess Margaret, whom he would happily keep waiting at the west door

while he groomed his hair in the vestry.

In 1978, aged 74, still extraordinarily youthful in appearance, Harris retired to a flat in Masham Court, Westminster, where thanks to a large legacy he lived in considerable comfort. He made no secret of his wealth, and it gave him great pleasure to use it to help other people. Even in his late years he remained amazingly entertaining and generous company, serving to unsuspecting luncheon guests enormous and semi-lethal cocktails, the mixing of which actually gave him very little trouble; at least nine-tenths was brandy.

Michael De-la-Noy

Donald Bertram Harris, priest: born 4 August 1904; ordained deacon 1927, priest 1928; Vicar, St Mary the Less, Cambridge 1931-36; Chaplain, King's College, Cambridge 1932-33; Rector, Great Greenford 1936-45; Rector, St Mary's, Bedford 1945-55; Archdeacon of Bedford 1946-55; Vicar, St Paul's, Knightsbridge 1955-78; died London 20 January 1996.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

IN MEMORIAM

FLINTOFF: Eddie (Ted), died suddenly 29 January 1994. Loving husband, brother, father, friend, forever remembered, forever missed.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS should be posted to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1, Cannon Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned on 0171-293 2011 or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

Wills
Professor Eric Barff Birley, of Greenhead, Northumberland, Professor of Romano-British History and Archaeology at Durham University 1956-71, left estate valued at £184,000 net.

Mr Arthur Frederick Holt, of Ambleside, Cumbria. Liberal MP for Bolton West 1951-64, left estate valued at £29,779 net.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS
The Princess of Wales attends a lunch given by the Association of American Correspondents in London at Brown's Hotel, London W1. The Princess Royal visits the Falkland Islands.

Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment presents the Queen's Life Guard in Horse Guards, 11am.

Birthdays

Dr Robin Astton, bibliographer, 63; Mr Malcolm Blunt, concert pianist, 60; Lord Brynbrooke, Lord-Lieutenant of Essex, 64; Mr Leslie Brisseau, composer, 65; Maj-Gen Sir George Burns, 85; Mr Peter Byrne, actor and director, 68; Lord Clyde, a Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland, 64; Dr Alec Coppen, newspaper editor, 72; The Right Rev Dom Charles Fitzgerald-Lombard, Abbot of Downside, 55; Mr John Forsythe, film and television actor, 79; Miss Germaine Greer, writer, 57; Lord Gregson, non-executive director, Faircity Group, 72; Mrs Carol Grindley, Editor, *Piano Journal*, 82; Professor Frank Hardy, Vice-Chancellor, Cranfield University, 54; Mr Timothy Healy, actor and comedian, 44; Mr Paul Hodder-Williams, publisher, 86; Earl Howe, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Defence, 45; Mr John Junkin, actor and scriptwriter, 66; Mr Sean Kelly, hockey player, 34; Miss Margaret Laird, Third Church Estates Commissioner, 63; Lord Lane of Horsell, chartered accountant, 71; Mr Henry Lewis, former deputy chairman, Berisford International, 70; Mr Victor Maurel, film actor, 81; Mr Michael Mavor, Headmaster, Rugby School, 49; Mr Richard Needham MP, 54; Mr James Nicholson MEP, 51; Mr Cecil Redman, chairman, Godfrey Davies, 79; Mr Andy Roberts, cricketer, 45; Miss Katharine Ross, film actress, 53; Professor Abdul Salam, Professor of Theoretical Physics, 70; Mr Tom Settleck, actor, 51; Mr Raman Subba Row, former chairman, Test and

County Cricket Board, 64; Viscount Toppandy, former Speaker of the House of Commons, 87; Mr Brian Trubshaw, former test pilot, 72.

Anniversaries

Births: Lucy Hutchinson, biographer, 1620; Emanuel Swedenborg, scientist and philosopher, 1688; Daniel Bernoulli, mathematician, 1700; Thomas Paine, writer and reformer, 1737; William Sharp, line-engraver, 1748; Ernst Eduard Kummer, mathematician, 1810; William McKinley, 25th US president, 1843; Sir David Murray, artist, 1849; Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, author and playwright, 1860; Frederick Delius, composer, 1862; Romain Rolland, novelist, 1866; Sir William Rothenstein, artist, 1872; Haverall Brian, composer, 1876; W.C. Fields (William Claude Dukenfield), actor, 1880; Paddy Stuey Chayefsky, playwright and screenwriter, 1923. Deaths: Pope Gelasius II, 1119; King George III, 1802; Edward Lear, landscape painter and writer, 1888; Sir William Witherell, physician, 1890; Alfred Sisley, landscape painter, 1899; Evelyn Baring, first Earl of Cromer, diplomat, 1917; Elihu Vedder, painter, 1923; Douglas, first Earl Haig, field marshal, 1928; Blom Joseph Arnold, electrical engineer and scriptwriter, 1942; Harry Lloyd Hopkins, politician, 1946; James Bridie (Osborne Henry Mavor), playwright and physician, 1951; Henry Louis Menckes, writer, 1956; Angela Margaret Thirkell, novelist, 1961; Fritz Kreisler, violinist, 1962; Robert Lee Frost, poet, 1963; Alan

Ladd, actor, 1964; Jimmy (James Francis) Durante, comedian, 1980. On this day: John Goy's *The Beggar's Opera* was first performed, London 1728; Oliver Goldsmith's *The Good-Natured Man*, by Oliver Goldsmith, was first performed, London 1768; the Reform Parliament opened, 1833; Greenwich Mean Time was adopted in Scotland, 1848; the Victoria Cross was founded, 1856; Karl-Friedrich Benz patented a motor-driven two-seater tractor, 1886; *Desert Island Discs* was first broadcast, 1942. Today is the Feast of St Gildas the Wise, St Sabinian of Troyes and St Sulpicius "Severus".

Mozart Summer Festival

The Austrian Ambassador, Dr Georg Hennig, proposed a toast to the immortal memory of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart at a ceremony on Saturday at the Mozart statue in Orange Square, London SW1, where musicians from the Mozart Summer Festival in Styria Homes and County Houses in 18th-century costume played a musical tribute on the occasion of the anniversary of Mozart's birth.

Martha Kingston Ward, Director of the Festival, received the guests at a reception held afterwards following the Mozart Birthday Concert at St Michael's Church, Chester Square, London SW1.

Lectures

Victoria and Albert Museum: Clare Ford-Wille, "Saints in Renaissance Art", 2.30pm.

The following notes of judgments were prepared by the reporters of the *All England Law Reports*.

Bankruptcy

Morris v Marjula; CA (First, Peter Gibson LJ, Buxton J); 26 Dec 1995. The High Court had power to grant an injunction preventing a bankrupt leaving the country, in order to secure his compliance with duties imposed by s 333 of the Insolvency Act 1986.

Matthew Collins (Nabarro Nathanson) for the bankrupt; Philip S. Marshall (Dibb Lupton Broadhead) for the trustee in bankruptcy.

Children

Re M (a minor: habitual residence); CA (Millett, Balcombe LJ); 28 Dec 1995.

The "habitual residence" of a child, for the purposes of a dispute under the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (Sch 1) to the Child Abduction and Custody Act 1985) was a question of fact. Someone must be physically resident in the country to acquire habitual residence there. A child who had by his parents' agreement lived half his life with his grandparents abroad could not ac-

CASE SUMMARIES

29 January 1996

Christopher Metcalf (CPS) as an interested party.

Revenue

Couch (Inspector of Taxes) v Caton's Administrators; ChD (Rimer J); 26 Dec 1995. Costs incurred in disputing a valuation of unquoted shares for capital gains tax purposes and the costs of an appeal to the special commissioners were not allowable as deductions in computing a chargeable gain on the disposal of the shares. Deductible valuation costs within the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979, s 32(2)(b) (now Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, s 38(2)(b)) extended only to the initial valuation carried in order to comply with the requirement for making a return.

Launcelot Henderson QC (Inland Revenue Solicitor) for the Crown; William Massey (Rayner de Wolfe for Brooke North & Goodwin, Leeds) for the taxpayer.

Road

Re v Greenwich London Borough Council, ex p Williams; QBD (Macpherson J); 19 Dec 1995.

The words "likelihood of danger to the public" in s 14 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 were not apt to enable a local authority to close a road temporarily because of environmental circumstances such as danger to the public from air pollution caused by traffic. The section only covered circumstances such as a spillage on the road making its use dangerous to the public or where a road across a heath was affected by smoke from a heath fire.

Graham Reed (Leigh Day & Co) for the applicant; Martin Wood (Borough Solicitor) for the council.

Trade description

Re Pags CA (Crim Div) (Kennedy LJ, Judge, Clarke LJ); 14 Dec 1995. If a person giving information, under s 29(1) of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968, which was reasonably required of an interviewee in an interview under caution by a trading standards officer for the purposes of the performance of the Act, makes a false statement, then he is liable to be prosecuted under s 29(2).

Julian Christopher (Registrar of Criminal Appeals) for the appellant; Simon Blackford (David Over, Reading) for the prosecution.

Re v Greenwich London Borough Council, ex p Williams; QBD (Macpherson J); 19 Dec 1995.

The words "likelihood of danger to the public" in s 14 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 were not apt to enable a local authority to close a road temporarily because of environmental circumstances such as danger to the public from air pollution caused by traffic. The section only covered circumstances such as a spillage on the road making its use dangerous to the public or where a road across a heath was affected by smoke from a heath fire.

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Olga Havlová

TODAY

Companies: Bullough, the engineering, heating and office products company, is not expected to improve on last year's £17.6m pre-tax profits when it reports its full-year figures today.

The group has already warned of a drop in trading at Atal, the French office-furniture subsidiary, and the City is forecasting profits of anywhere between £13.5m and £18.5m. The total dividend will stay at 6.05p a share for the year.

Europarm warned in June that holiday sales were sluggish and the City is expecting no fireworks from the camping holiday group today. However, the group does appear to have weathered the stubbornly high French franc with lower cross-channel ferry charges boosting bookings for campsites in France.

NatWest Markets is forecasting full-year pre-tax profits of between £8.8m and £9.7m against £8.7m last year.

Interims: Courtyard Leisure.

Companies: Filtronic Comtek, Haynes Publishing, TR Smaller Cos Investment Trust.

Finals: Rhine-Poulenc Rorer, SGS-Thomson, St Andrews Trust, Trencherwood, USDC Investment Trust.

Annual general meetings: Chrysalis Group, Kleinwort European, National Home Loans.

EGMs: Ingham.

Economics: Banking mortgage lending figures for December will indicate whether they, too, have dropped in line with the recent fall in building society loans. In Japan, industrial production in December will be watched closely to see if the hoped-for recovery is coming through; it rose by 1.5 per cent in November.

TOMORROW

Companies: Adscene Group, Birkdale Group, Edinburgh Smaller Companies, Games Workshop, Kay's Food Group.

WEDNESDAY

Companies: Anglo United, Beales Hunter, Bucknall

THE WEEK AHEAD

Group, Cavaghan & Gray. Eurodis Electron, Hildong Estate, Illingworth Morris, Kay's Food Group, Pool Holdings, Zetters.

Finals: Allied Textile Companies, Fyffes, Harry Ramsden's, Poirair.

Annual general meetings: Data General, Hanson, M&G Group.

EGMs: Boustead, Ellis & Everard.

Economics: The Bank of England sells a further £3bn worth of gilts, this time for five-year debt.

The minutes of the meeting between Kenneth Clarke and Eddie George on 13 December, when base rate was cut by a quarter point, will provide a clue to whether the Governor is likely to have backed the move to a quarter-point reduction in January. The Council of Mortgage Lenders will publish figures for mortgage repossessions in the second half of 1995.

In France, the unemployment rate is expected to edge up to 11.6 per cent in November following renewed signs of economic weakness.

THURSDAY

Companies: Mysis, the information systems group, is expected to produce a sharply improved performance at the half-way stage with interim pre-tax profits more than doubled at £22.6m, according to NatWest Markets.

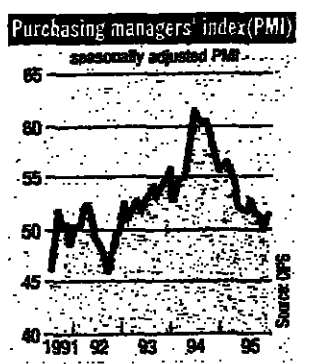
The banking division has embarked on new strategy that is expected to enhance the development of the core products. The insurance division will benefit from last year's acquisition of Penta, which will strengthen Mysis' position in the personal lines intermediary software market, now above 50 per cent.

In the information systems division a poor performance from Quasar will be compensated by a strong performance from core products.

Interims: Peter Black Holdings, TR City of London, Wholesale Fittings.

Finals: Gartmore British Income & Growth, Hotsip Investments.

Annual general meetings:



FRIDAY

Care UK. EGMs: Ashbourne.

Economics: The global trade balance for November will come under the spotlight to see how hard the European slowdown is hitting UK exporters. The big fall in imports which propelled the French trade balance to a record surplus in November suggests that UK exporters have been having a hard time. The overall trade gap is expected to decline to £900m from £1.7bn in October.

Final and full monetary statistics for December will be watched for the behaviour of consumer credit, which has recently been growing at a brisk pace of 1.3 per cent.

The purchasing managers' report is expected to show manufacturing at a standstill equivalent to an index reading of 50. In the US, a similar report is forecast to show the manufacturing sector remaining in recession. The German Bundesbank Council meets but no change is expected in the discount rate.

Companies: Interims: None scheduled.

Finals: Malvern UK Index, Mitras Inv Trust, Motor World Group.

Annual general meetings: Compass Group, Hozelock Group, Macdonald Martin Distillers, Rossmore, Second Consolidated Trust, Vaux Group, Willoughby's Consolidated.

EGMs: Brackenbridge.

Economics: The Halifax index for January will be watched closely to see if there is a sixth successive monthly increase in house prices. UK official reserves for January are expected to remain flat.

In the US, the market is expected to show non-farm payrolls to grow by 125,000 following the rise of 150,000 in December. The unemployment rate is forecast to rise from 5.6 to 5.7 per cent.

Economics data: Deutsche Morgan Grenfell

Share	Price	Change	Volume	Value
100	100.00	0.00	100	100.00
200	200.00	0.00	200	200.00
300	300.00	0.00	300	300.00
400	400.00	0.00	400	400.00
500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
1000	1000.00	0.00	1000	1000.00

Share	Price	Change	Volume	Value
100	100.00	0.00	100	100.00
200	200.00	0.00	200	200.00
300	300.00	0.00	300	300.00
400	400.00	0.00	400	400.00
500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
1000	1000.00	0.00	1000	1000.00

Share	Price	Change	Volume	Value
100	100.00	0.00	100	100.00
200	200.00	0.00	200	200.00
300	300.00	0.00	300	300.00
400	400.00	0.00	400	400.00
500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
1000	1000.00	0.00	1000	1000.00

Share	Price	Change	Volume	Value
100	100.00	0.00	100	100.00
200	200.00	0.00	200	200.00
300	300.00	0.00	300	300.00
400	400.00	0.00	400	400.00
500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
1000	1000.00	0.00	1000	1000.00

Share	Price	Change	Volume	Value
100	100.00	0.00	100	100.00
200	200.00	0.00	200	200.00
300	300.00	0.00	300	300.00
400	400.00	0.00	400	400.00
500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
1000	1000.00	0.00	1000	1000.00

Share	Price	Change	Volume	Value
100	100.00	0.00	100	100.00
200	200.00	0.00	200	200.00
300	300.00	0.00	300	300.00
400	400.00	0.00	400	400.00
500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
1000	1000.00	0.00	1000	1000.00

Share	Price	Change	Volume	Value
100	100.00	0.00	100	100.00
200	200.00	0.00	200	200.00
300	300.00	0.00	300	300.00
400	400.00	0.00	400	400.00
500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
1000	1000.00	0.00	1000	1000.00

Share	Price	Change	Volume	Value
100	100.00	0.00	100	100.00
200	200.00	0.00	200	200.00
300	300.00	0.00	300	300.00
400	400.00	0.00	400	400.00
500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
1000	1000.00	0.00	1000	1000.00

Share	Price	Change	Volume	Value
100	100.00	0.00	100	100.00
200	200.00	0.00	200	200.00
300	300.00	0.00	300	300.00
400	400.00	0.00	400	400.00
500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
1000	1000.00	0.00	1000	1000.00

Share	Price	Change	Volume	Value
100	100.00	0.00	100	100.00
200	200.00	0.00	200	200.00
300	300.00	0.00	300	300.00
400	400.00	0.00	400	400.00
500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
1000	1000.00	0.00	1000	1000.00

Share	Price	Change	Volume	Value
100	100.00	0.00	100	100.00
200	200.00	0.00	200	200.00
300	300.00	0.00	300	300.00
400	400.00	0.00	400	400.00
500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
1000	1000.00	0.00	1000	1000.00

Share	Price	Change	Volume	Value
100	100.00	0.00	100	100.00
200	200.00	0.00	200	200.00
300	300.00	0.00	300	300.00
400	400.00	0.00	400	400.00
500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
1000	1000.00	0.00	1000	1000.00

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400	400.00	0.00	400	400.00
500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
1000	1000.00	0.00	1000	1000.00

Share	Price	Change	Volume	Value
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500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
1000	1000.00	0.00	1000	1000.00

Share	Price	Change	Volume	Value
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200	200.00	0.00	200	200.00
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400	400.00	0.00	400	400.00
500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
1000	1000.00	0.00	1000	1000.00

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500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
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400	400.00	0.00	400	400.00
500	500.00	0.00	500	500.00
600	600.00	0.00	600	600.00
700	700.00	0.00	700	700.00
800	800.00	0.00	800	800.00
900	900.00	0.00	900	900.00
1000	1000.00	0.00	1000	1000.00

Member	50	27	104	264
Nonmember	100	10	10	10
Admission	100	10	10	10
Food	100	10	10	10
Bar	100	10	10	10
Photo	100	10	10	10
Gift Shop	100	10	10	10
Refreshment	100	10	10	10
Hotel	100	10	10	10
Transport	100	10	10	10
Medical	100	10	10	10
Refreshment	100	10	10	10
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Transport	100	10	10	10
Medical	100	10	10	10
Refreshment	100	10	10	10
Hotel	100	10	10	10
Transport	100	10	10	10
Medical	100	10	10	10
Refreshment	100			

Battle looms over Lloyds Chemists

NIC CICUTTI

Unichem, the pharmaceuticals retailer and wholesaler hoping to snap up Lloyds Chemists for £545m, faces the prospect of a full-scale takeover battle today with a potential counter-bid from Gehe, its German rival.

Gehe is believed to be studying closely the possibility of making an offer for Lloyds Chemists, although sources insist that no final decision had yet been taken. The German company has until February 14, when the acceptance from Lloyds becomes unconditional, to make its bid.

Analysts said yesterday that they believed an offer from Gehe was likely, if only to force Unichem to pay more than it was originally prepared to for Lloyds Chemists.

Unichem would still be in a position to raise the stakes further, but would have to go significantly above the 414p a share Lloyds was valued at when the original bid was made. Lloyds shares rose to 420p on Friday as speculation about a rival Gehe bid mounted.

A Unichem spokesman said the company was not prepared to comment on the possibility of a Gehe counter-bid.

"We have been speaking for a long time with Lloyds and have offered a fair price which has been accepted," he said. "We shall just have to see whether Gehe come in."

However, one analyst who has been closely observing the negotiations between Lloyds and Unichem said yesterday: "My feeling is that Gehe may make an offer. They do not want Lloyds to go cheaply. But if they do, they will be trumped by Unichem in the end."

"Unichem can afford to go higher without any dilution in earnings and it is possible that they will be forced to. Lloyds has

been misunderstood by the stock market for some time and is now a sound company with a good management team in place."

Speculation over a possible Gehe bid follows the announcement less than two weeks ago that Lloyds Chemists had agreed to a Unichem offer for the company, which would create the UK's largest retail chain, with more than 1,300 outlets. Unichem has promised cost savings of £20m a year from its merger, equal to a third of Lloyds profits in the 12 months to June last year.

Unichem is strong in phar-

maceutical wholesaling and distribution, while Lloyds brings 924 stores, Holland & Barrett, its health food chain, and a veterinary wholesaler.

The company said the creation of an integrated retailing and wholesale operation would give it added clout, trebling its retail market share from 3.5 per cent to 11 per cent, and raising its stake in the wholesaling market from a current figure of 32 per cent.

Trading under the Moss Chemists name, Unichem said the takeover would also allow it to enter the own-brand market, rivaling Boots the

Chemists, which would have 100 fewer branches than itself.

The deal was also expected to net more than £40m for Allen Lloyd, the Lloyds chairman, and his family, who hold a 7.5 per cent stake in the company. He helped to found with his brother Peter almost 20 years ago. Allen Lloyd, who has a two-year £510,000 contract with Lloyds, had committed his own holding to the deal. He is expected to resign if the Unichem takeover goes through. Peter Lloyd stood down from the company last year.

Gehe, one of Europe's largest drug distributors, has

about 30 per cent of the market in Britain following its £400m acquisition last year of AAH, the distributor. The company was said yesterday to be interested in adding to its 300-strong Hills Pharmacy chain. However, it may find difficulties in raising the funds it would need after its £400m outlay on AAH.

Lloyds has only recently started to rehabilitate itself after several years when it faced criticism in the City for its aggressive use of acquisition provisions, lack of financial information and shortage of independent voices on the board.

Pension advisers cleared by PIA

NIC CICUTTI

A City watchdog's inquiry is poised to clear insurance companies and independent financial advisers of allegations that they have been engaged in the systematic mis-selling of top-up pensions to their clients.

The personal investment authority will say there is no serious evidence that its members wrongly advised people to set up free-standing voluntary contribution schemes in place of company ones.

The regulator is, however, expected to repeat guidance given to insurers and IFAs as to when it is appropriate to sell such policies to their clients.

Its findings are aimed at damping down fears that the mis-selling of top-up pensions was likely to lead to a repeat of the personal pension scandal.

In that instance, insurers face a compensation bill worth billions of pounds after a report in October 1994 said that up to 1.5 million people were wrongly advised to transfer out of their company pension schemes.

A separate PIA investigation began last year after reports that people in company pension schemes were being advised to top them up or face a lower income at retirement.

Many employees in company schemes may not have paid enough into them to guarantee a full pension. Employers often have arrangements enabling their staff to pay additional voluntary contributions to boost retirement benefits.

Company top-up schemes are usually cheaper because most or all of the management charges are met by employers. In contrast, anyone with a private pension arrangement could end up paying hundreds, or even thousands of pounds in charges by the time they retire.

Suggestions last year that advisers were promoting expensive free-standing schemes in place of cheaper company ones drew condemnation from the Trades Union Congress.

However, despite suggestions that hundreds of thousands of free-standing voluntary contribution schemes had been inappropriately sold, it is understood the PIA was unable to find more than a few cases where this was the case.

It is believed that the TUC was unable to produce evidence to back its claims. Garry Heath, chief executive of the IFA Association, the advisers' trade body, said: "This confirms what we thought. Our members acted in the best interest of their clients."

Pipeline dispute for British Gas

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

British Gas faces a fresh row over charges levied on other companies that need to use its pipes. At least seven companies, including Amerasia Hess and Total Gas, are understood to have warned the company that they will use powers under the Gas Act to have planned increases in charges overturned by the watchdog, Ofgas.

Under the Gas Act, companies using the pipes have the right to ask Clare Spottiswoode, director general of Ofgas, to block price changes and impose new - and, they hope, lower - ones on British Gas.

Use of this power, never called on before by the industry, would be the latest in a series of blows suffered by the company and would come only weeks before the domestic market is due to be opened to competition in the South-west. Rivals to British Gas, which include offshore companies and electricity firms, fear that high pipeline charges would squeeze their margins enough to make it harder to compete in the newly opening marketplace. Some of the new entrants are planning to undercut British Gas's domestic prices by up to 15 per cent.

The debacle over pipeline charges began last year when British Gas outraged its rivals with proposals to increase its charges for use of its pipelines by up to 10 per cent in some cases and was persuaded by Ofgas to think again. But the revised prices - due to come into effect on 1 March, are still much higher than the industry believes is justified or is prepared to accept.

A spokesman for British Gas's pipeline arm, TransCo, said the company was aware of

the impending battle but was not intending to change its stance.

"We have sent out revised prices and we are sticking to those. It is a less high increase than originally proposed and it will come into effect as planned on 1 March," he said.

Ofgas declined to comment on the situation but said it was aware of the discontent. Ms Spottiswoode cannot intervene until directly asked to do so and the Gas Act requires those complaining to give British Gas about four weeks' notice before they attack. The first calls for action are expected to come within days.

Under its price control formula, TransCo is supposed to keep increases in charges to inflation minus five percentage points. But the plans for 1 March would see prices for some shippers rise by several points above inflation because of technical loopholes in the way the formula works.

The row has angered TransCo, which accounts for the bulk of British Gas's multi-billion-pound assets. When Ofgas first intervened last year, Harry Moulson, TransCo's managing director, complained that his company had been in negotiation with the regulator for four months and felt that the planned increases were in line with regulations governing the industry.

In a letter to Ms Spottiswoode in October, Mr Moulson said: "I must point out that TransCo has been completely open with Ofgas about the effects of the new prices on the different markets, and I find it impossible to believe that Ofgas did not already have sufficient information to make a judgement on whether or not the prices were in accordance with the authorisation."

Virgin 'close to rail link victory'

NIC CICUTTI and
MARY FAGAN

Virgin, the airline-to-vodka empire headed by Richard Branson, is believed to be close to clinching the £3bn deal with the Government to build the Channel Tunnel rail link.

A consortium that includes Virgin has been holding detailed talks with senior Department of Transport officials over the project to build the 68-mile link between London and the Kent coast. An announcement is expected next month.

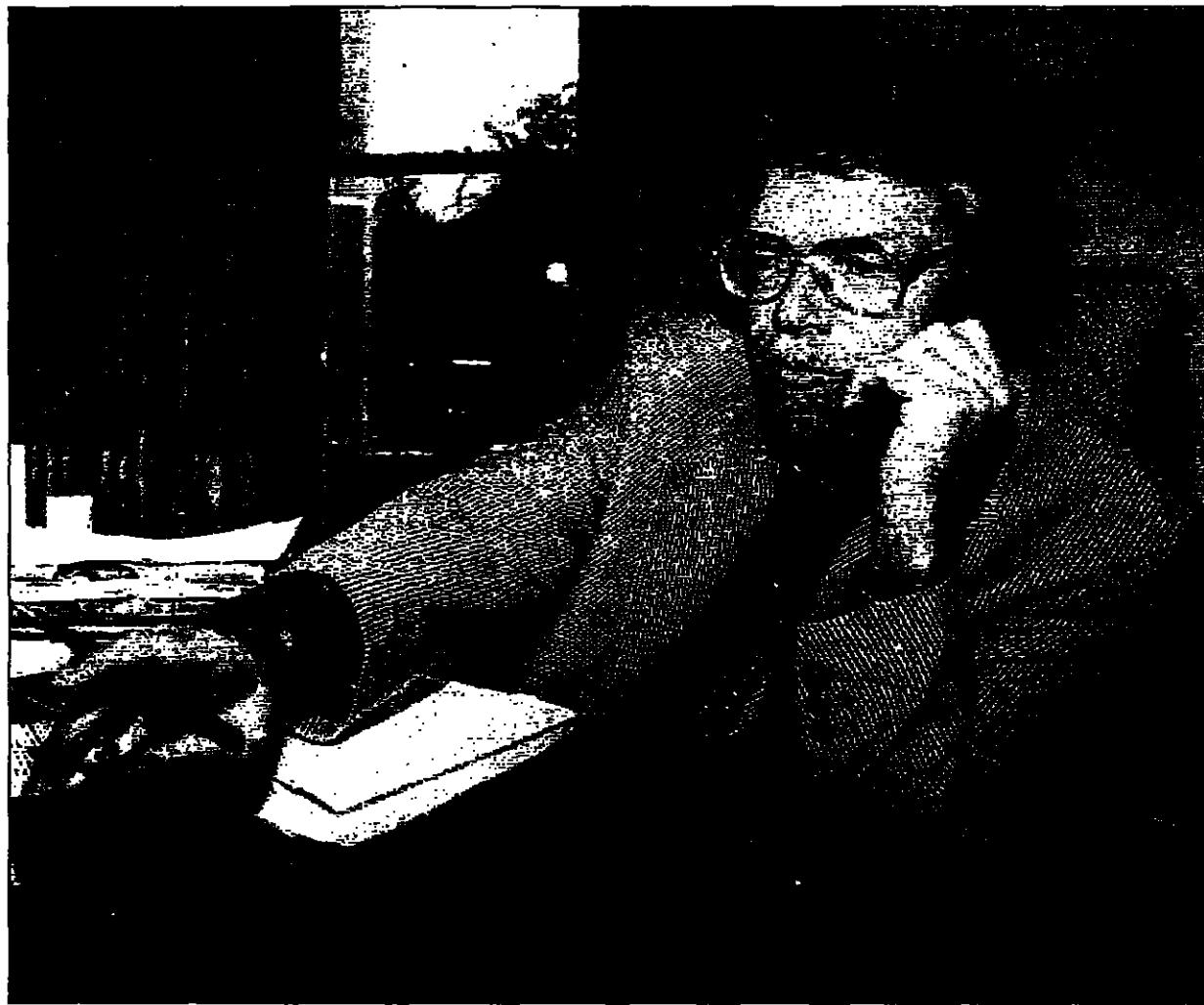
The rival bidder Eurorail, backed by the construction groups Trafalgar House and BICC, was said yesterday to have fallen by the wayside after doubts were cast about its experience. But sources close to Eurorail said the partners remained optimistic.

If the deal goes to Virgin's consortium, London & Continental Railways, it will go some way to overcoming disappointments at Virgin after losing bids both to run the National Lottery and the new Channel 5 television service. The L&CR consortium includes National Express, the bus company, Bechtel, the American construction group, and SBC Warburg, the merchant bank.

In a separate move, Virgin has also embarked on an ambitious expansion of its book publishing business, emerging as a final bidder in the £10m auction of Reed Consumer Books from Reed Elsevier.

The acquisition would give Virgin rights to a star-studded stable of authors including William Boyd and Roddy Doyle, and to well-loved names such as Winnie the Pooh and Thomas the Tank Engine.

It is believed that a rail link deal might include granting L&CR a 999-year contract to run the trains. Financing the rail link would come from a public



On the line: Success in the rail bid and with the Reed auction would be a strong boost for Richard Branson's Virgin

flotation of L&CR, in which Virgin is said to have a 15 per cent stake, next year. Building the new line from its new terminus at Kings Cross to the coast would be completed within about six years.

Meanwhile, Virgin and National Express would take over the running of the Eurostar rail service to the Continent. Virgin has already declared an inter-

est in running the Gatwick Express airport shuttle service, but there is fierce competition for the route, with British Airways rumoured to be interested.

Sources claim that Eurorail's bid, the rival to L&CR, is being vetoed by ministers who do not believe it could lift flagging sales of Eurostar tickets.

However, it is understood that Eurorail is disputing claims

that it is out of the running. Senior members of its team were holding discussions at the Department of Transport on Friday.

Virgin's planned publishing acquisition would add names such as Hamlyn, Heinemann, Methuen and Secker & Warburg to its book operation, which made a profit last year of about £1.5m on a turnover of

£15m. Virgin is thought to have trumped offers from a number of venture-capital backed rivals.

The bid falls far short of the £250m price tag some City analysts originally thought Reed Consumer Books might command before a fall in profits and the recent demise of the Net Book Agreement. Virgin declined to comment on the proposed takeover.

Surveyors predict property revival

TOM STEVENSON
City Editor

Commercial property values will start rising again this year after a year of underperformance against other asset classes and continued divestment by investing institutions, according to an industry survey out today. The findings by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors chime with other reports this week pointing to increasing overseas interest in UK property, increasing tenant demand and rising rents.

Graham Chase, RICS property spokesman, said: "During 1996, tax cuts and falling interest rates will improve consumer confidence, benefitting the property sector and the economy as a whole. We forecast that commercial property values will rise by 6 per cent this year."

He added, however, that tenants remained in the driving seat, with landlords still forced to offer incentives such as rent

free periods and short leases at low rents for all but the very best property.

According to property adviser DTZ Debenham Thorpe, property values will be driven by overseas interest which remains strong, despite a disappointing return last year of 5.3 per cent from property compared with 24 per cent from UK equities and 34 per cent from US shares.

Thanks to the purchase of Canary Wharf, US buyers emerged as the largest source of foreign investment last year, taking over from the Germans.

They have been attracted by the high yields available on property compared to fixed interest investments such as gilts. As interest rates fall, property values are expected to rise throughout 1996. Shortage of new building is pushing rents higher in favoured locations such as central London, which in turn is attracting overseas participation in development.

US rate hopes rise as economy weakens

PAUL WALLACE
Economics Editor

The key policymaking committee of the US Federal Reserve meets tomorrow with hopes rising high that it will cut interest rates by a further quarter point to 5.25 per cent.

Mark Cliffe, international economist at HBSC Markets, said the odds favour such a cut. "They showed in December that they were ready to cut rates despite the ongoing wrangling over the budget, and the evidence since then is that the economy continues to weaken."

With yields on three month Treasuries at just over 5.10 per cent last Friday, the market is pricing in a further reduction in the Federal funds rate at which banks lend to each other overnight. Yields three years out are well below 5.25 per cent.

The extent to which the market expects a further cut can be gauged from the drop in yields on most US Treasuries since the

Fed reduced the target fed funds rate last December. This has been particularly marked at the short end of the yield curve.

The markets' confidence that US Fed will cut rates again comes from accumulating evidence that the economy is weakening and that inflation remains under control.

Employment growth was slightly stronger than anticipated, with non-farm payrolls rising in December. However, hours worked fell and the January Employment Report is expected to see growth of only 125,000 jobs. The unemployment rate is forecast to rise from 5.6 to 5.7 per cent.

A particular area of weakness is manufacturing. The inventory overhang is putting manufacturers under intense pressure to satisfy demand from stocks.

Meanwhile the Fed's recent Beige Book was notable for the absence of inflationary pressures. Consumer price inflation rose 2.6 per cent in November.

IN BRIEF

Return of consumer confidence forecast

Sales of food, drink and tobacco are expected to rise sharply over the next few months as consumer confidence reappears in the UK economy, according to forecasts by the Chartered Institute of Marketing. The survey of UK's sales and marketing experts' views, showed the service sector is expected to strengthen, while manufacturing, including machinery and equipment is weakening.

KKR interest in Meridien hotel chain

Kohlberg Kravis Roberts, the US arbitrageur, is understood to be among several potential buyers lining up for the Meridien and Exclusive hotels chains being sold by Granada following its successful £3.9bn bid for the Forté group. Other interested buyers are said to include Hilton, Marriott, ITT Sheraton and Accor.

Smaller companies at a standstill

Orders from small and medium firms have been at a virtual standstill in the past four months, according to a survey carried out by the Confederation of British Industry and chartered accountants Pannell Kerr Forster. It showed that output for small and medium enterprises grew at the slowest rate since October 1993. Investment intentions in plant and machinery are at their lowest since January 1993. Although demand is expected to grow in coming months, business optimism fell for the second consecutive time.

Equitas may receive £500m boost

Warren Buffett, the US investor, is believed to be considering injecting £500m in Equitas, the Lloyds rescue vehicle which recently announced it needs a further £1.9bn to meet the run-off of asbestos and pollution liabilities.

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STOCK MARKETS									
FTSE-100									
Index	Close	Week's chg	Change (%)	1995/96 High	1995/96 Low	1995/96 High	1995/96 Low	1995/96 High	1995/96 Low
FTSE 100	3734.70	-13.7	-0.4	3758.20	2954.20	3.83			
FTSE 250	4085.60	+12.0	+0.3	4086.90	3300.90	3.59			
FTSE 350	1854.60	-4.2	-0.2	1863.90	1482.40	3.78			
FT Small Cap	2006.58	+17.4	+0.9	2005.58	1678.61	3.12			
FT All Share	1828.89	-2.6	-0.1	1827.17	1465.23	3.73			
New York	5871.75	+87.1	+1.5	5871.75	3832.06	2.28			
Tokyo	20663.84	+238.1	+1.2	20669.03	14495.41	0.79			
Hong Kong	11111.87	+347.8	+3.2	11111.87	8987.93	3.35			
Frankfurt	2432.93	+34.2	+1.4	2443.72	1910.96	1.82			

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES									
UK interest rates									
Benchmark yield curve 0-25 year gilt (%)									
1 Month	5.90	1 Year	5.90	2 Year	5.90	3 Year	5.90	5 Year	5.90
10 Year	5.90	15 Year	5.90	20 Year	5.90	25 Year	5.90	30 Year	5.90
US interest rates									
Benchmark yield curve 0-30 year treasury (%)									
1 Month	5.90	1 Year	5.90	2 Year	5.90	3 Year	5.90	5 Year	5.90
10 Year	5.90	15 Year	5.90	20 Year	5.90	25 Year	5.90	30 Year	5.90

CURRENCIES

£/\$

\$/DM

Pound vs.

	Close	Week's Chg	Tr. Age
\$ (London)	1.5030	-0.75c	1.5045
\$ (N York)	1.5036	-0.45c	1.5065
DM (London)	2.2412	+0.72p	2.2425
Y (London)	160.327	+1.233	159.09
£ Index	83.1	+0.3	88.5

Dollar vs.

	Close	Week's Chg	Tr. Age
\$ (London)	0.8653	+0.33	0.869
\$ (N York)	0.8651	+0.20	0.868
DM (London)	1.4912	+1.22p	1.55
Y (London)	106.875	+1.350	99.77
\$ Index	96.8	+1.1	96.1

OTHER INDICATORS

	Close	Week's chg	Tr. Age		Index	Latest	Tr. Age	Next Feb
OE Brand S	18.49	-0.63	18.43	RPI	150.7	+3.2pc	2.9	15 Feb
Gold \$	405.60	+6.00	378.35	GDP	106.9	1.80c	4.2	22 Feb
Gold £	269.86	+5.21	238.017	Base Rates	-	6.25pc	6.75	-

09/21/2012

news

Trumpeter sounds clarion call as opera looks forward to opening doors to the masses

Cut-price London production of 'La Bohème' niggles the establishment



JOHN MCKIE

When Puccini first premiered *La Bohème* – arguably the best known opera of all – on 1 February 1896 in Turin, it was an instant hit. After appearances in Manchester, New York and Paris, the musical tale of the fragile flower girl Mimi made its London debut in Covent Garden in 1899. To celebrate its centenary, *La Bohème* again starts a London run on 1 February, this Thursday.

Yet instead of a Covent Garden run at the Royal Opera House, this production is causing ructions in the opera world. The music promoter Raymond Gubbay is bringing *La Bohème* to the Royal Albert Hall, at a fraction of Royal Opera House prices.

He has already called the Royal Opera House "elitist and wasteful" and the marketing of this production has caused questions to be asked about the nature of opera subsidy and about the Royal Opera House and English National Opera.

Gubbay has thrown down the gauntlet, with a maximum ticket price of £37, compared with more than £100 for a Royal Opera House production, and hopes to fill 40,000 seats in the Royal Albert Hall over the next two weekends. Ticket sales so far have reached 25,300 in this revolutionary new way of selling opera and he has upped the performances from five to nine.

He said yesterday: "It's a completely different thing from what the Opera House does. This is performed in the round of the Albert Hall, and from the sales, it's very clear we're going



Welcome to the cheap seats: Rehearsals in Bow, east London, for Raymond Gubbay's 'La Bohème', which stars Vivien Tiernay (above left) Main photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

way beyond the normal opera audience."

There is also a successful touring production of *La Bohème* from Opera North, with ticket prices from £7-£36, but that has not come under fire from Gubbay. Opera North's production is almost sold out and after its current run at Leeds' Grand Theatre, will tour Hull, Sunderland, Nottingham and Manchester.

The Royal Opera House, which was criticised last year when it received £78.5m in National Lottery funding, has hit back, arguing that the scale of Gubbay's production is not in

the same league as its own efforts. Fraser Gordon, who has worked at the Royal Opera House for eight years, said: "This can fill an auditorium of 25,000 but we only have a 2,000 capacity and we have got orchestras, operas and ballets doing different productions all at the same time. We do live free relays into Covent Garden piazza, and all this has to be paid for."

"It's different quality. They're not going to be getting someone like Bernard Haitink to conduct, or Plácido Domingo to sing for one concert for them."

Gubbay's production, di-

rected by Michael Hunt, has two casts including both Katerina Kudriavchenko and Susan Bullock in the lead role of Mimi. Jose Avocar and Arthur Davies alternate as Rodolfo and Vivien Tiernay and Anne Williams-King share the role of Musetta.

New costumes have been designed by John Bright, who won an Oscar for his work on *Howards End*, and the entire cast has been rehearsing together for the past four weeks, which is unusually long for the production of such an established opera. Yesterday the cast of about 90 and the orchestra

were putting the final stages of their production together at the Three Mile Island in Bow, east London.

The Royal Opera House has so far had a disastrous 1996. It has suffered terrible publicity from staff redundancies, problems finding a temporary venue from 1997-99, and a BBC2 doc-

umentary portraying huge internal management squabbles. Raymond Gubbay said last night: "I had a handwritten letter from Jeremy Isaacs (the Royal Opera House director) the other day, asking me not to be so abusive about the House. That struck me as strange given that anyone watching the

documentary would see a much greater level of abuse. "*La Bohème* is being done commercially but that doesn't mean it won't be done with any less love or care than it was at Covent Garden. This shows there's a mass market for opera if you can market a show properly."

THIS WEEK IN THE INDEPENDENT

Today	
Tomorrow	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	

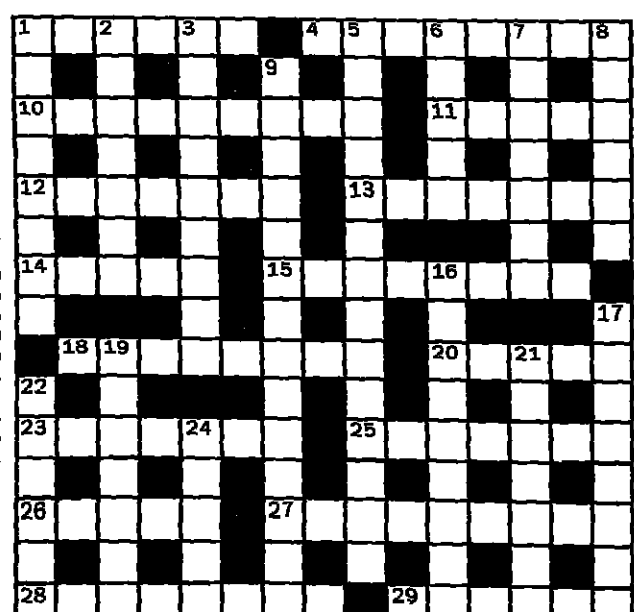


THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

in association with



No. 2895, Monday 29 January



- 27 He's no chance holding one old crazy boatman (9)
- 28 Girlfriend without Leo's upset and lonely (8)
- 29 Austrian composer gets space in Norwegian city (6)

DOWN

- 1 Man lies about adulterated cocaine drug (8)
- 2 Turn Australian on to a Dutch philosopher (7)
- 3 Land transport? (6,3)
- 5 Petition she'd be producing is irrelevant (6,3,5)
- 6 Expels Pole taken in by public school head (5)
- 7 On the road in France (2,5)
- 8 English society brought over suitable prize (6)
- 9 Currently suffer from financial problems? (4,3,7)
- 16 All right investing in rich tea processing plant (9)
- 17 Maybe collar government official (8)
- 19 Shore up shaky classical musician (7)
- 21 Position for giving birth (7)
- 22 Latty goods inside end up expensive (6)
- 24 Number practice with beginner getting birdie (5)

ACROSS

- 1 Pass it to be acceptable (6)
- 4 Only time contents of order is out of date (8)
- 10 Lazy state of undress? (9)
- 11 Member resisting pressure to show off (5)
- 12 Have a job with the Italian note (7)
- 13 Go, taking second place in contest (7)
- 14 Guy in the bar Lisa accused (5)
- 15 That wore out causing trouble (3,5)
- 18 Scrubs dish? (8)
- 20 Bill left with a percussion instrument (5)
- 23 Medicinal oil removed cold from a jar (7)
- 25 Alternative firm is backing key area of growth (7)
- 26 Told to feed horses (5)

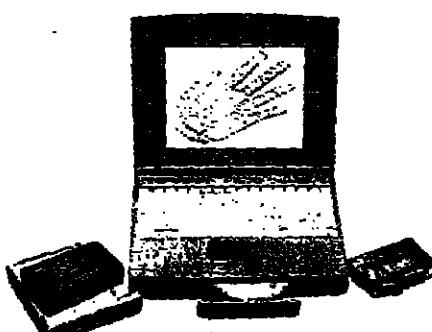
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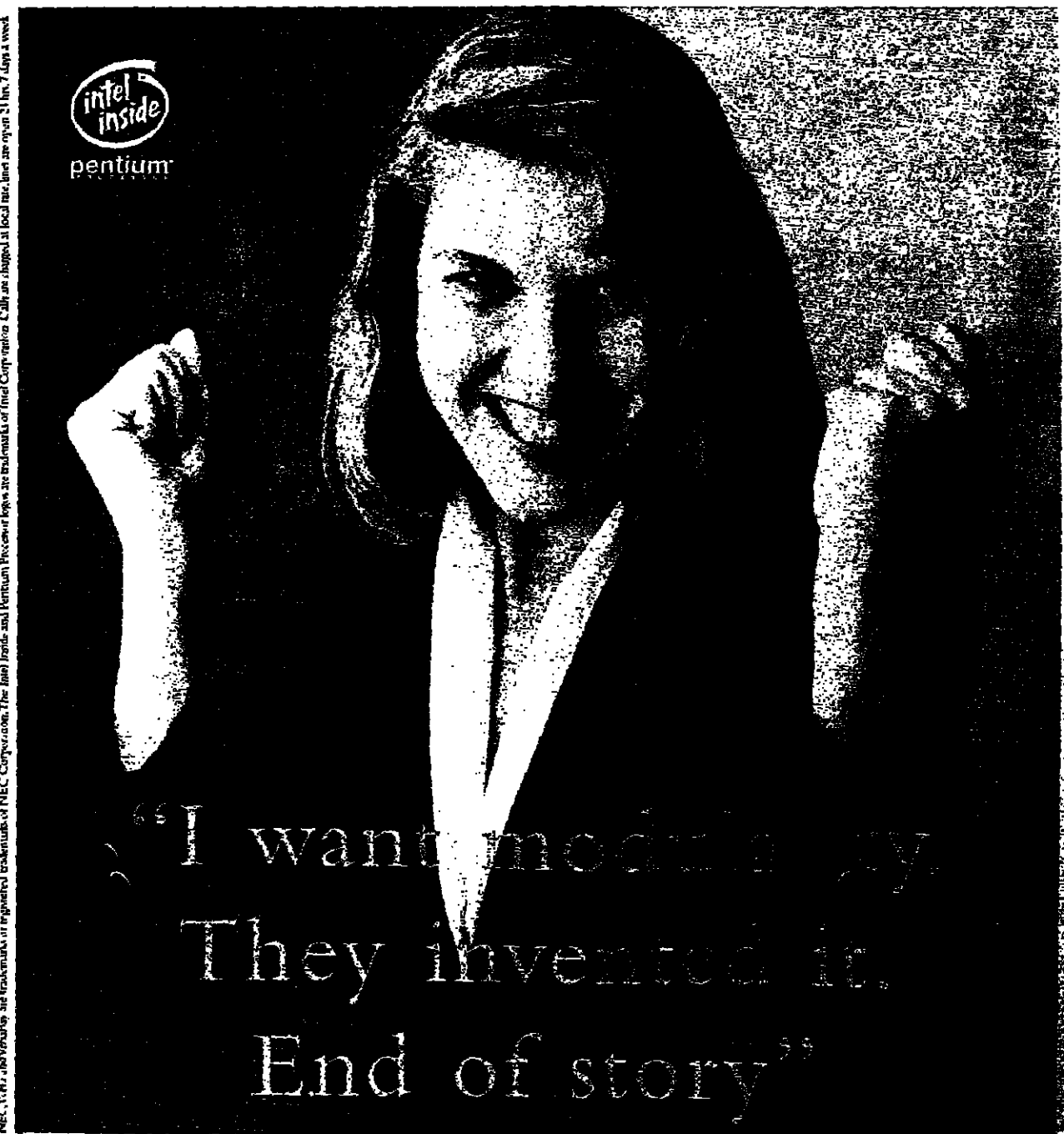
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